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Magnus Carlsen

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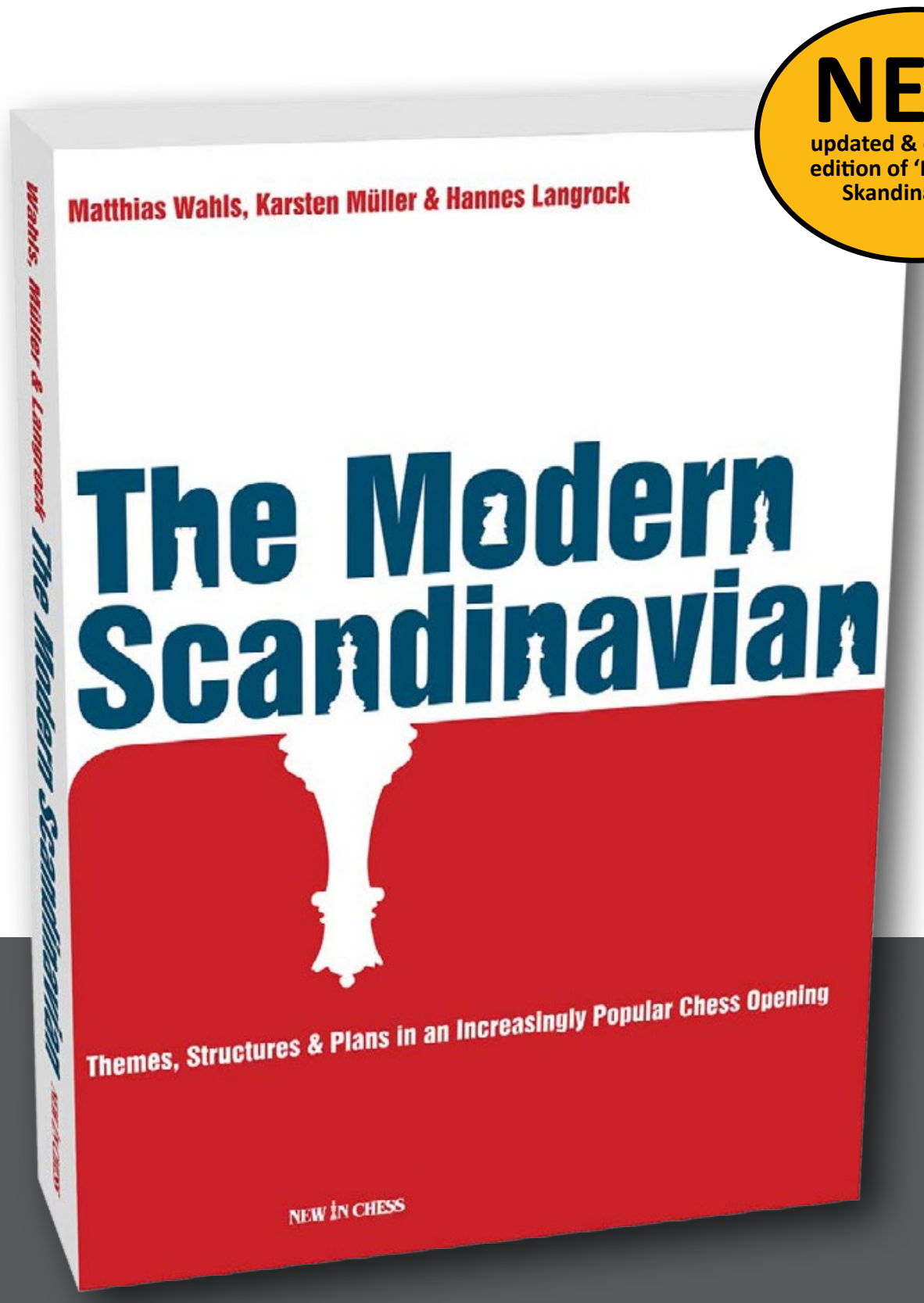
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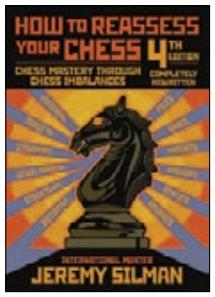

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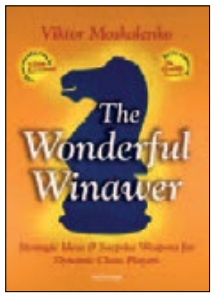

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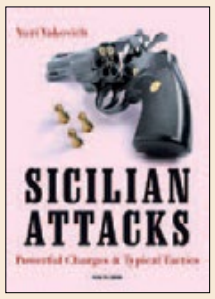

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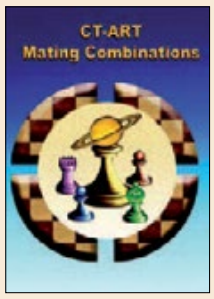

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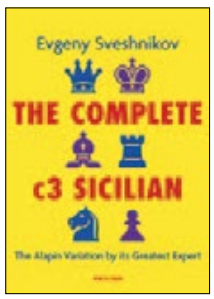

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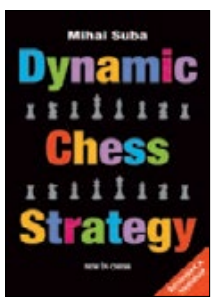

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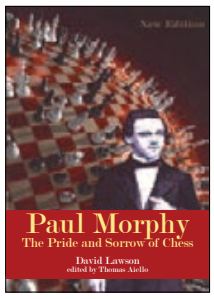

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2011 Issue 1

NEW IN CHESS

PUBLISHER: Allard Hoogland EDITORS-IN-CHIEF: Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam, Jan Timman

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The second edition of the London Chess Classic repeated everything that made the first one so memorable and enjoyable, rightly assuming that the difference would be made by the addition of World Champion Vishy Anand and the new games the grandmasters were going to delight us with. And although the winner's name also remained the same, the way Magnus Carlsen repeated last year's victory turned out to be an entirely different story.

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'Three years ago, when I finished in second place here in Reggio Emilia, my father told me that the trophy awarded to the winner was very pretty. I promised to win the cup for him next time. Today I'm so happy that I was able to keep that promise!', said Vugar Gashimov after his victory at the 53rd Torneo di Capodanno.

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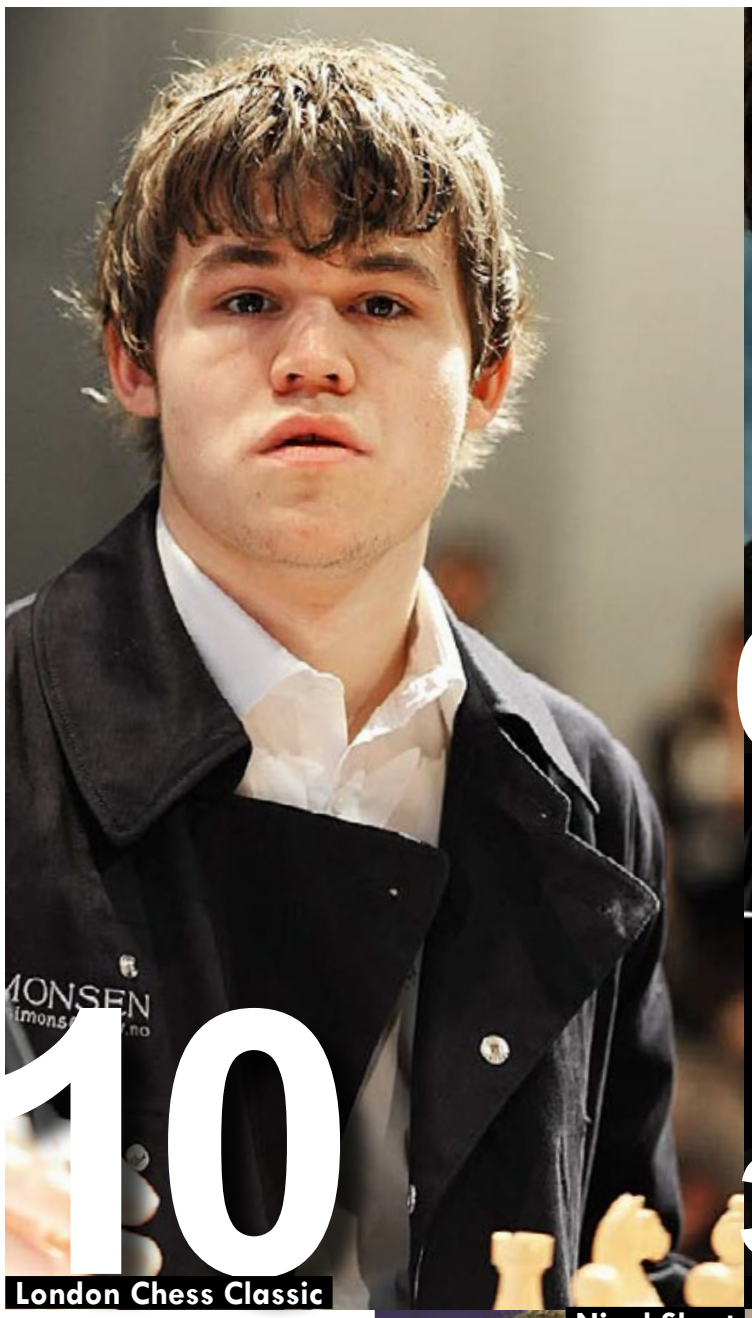

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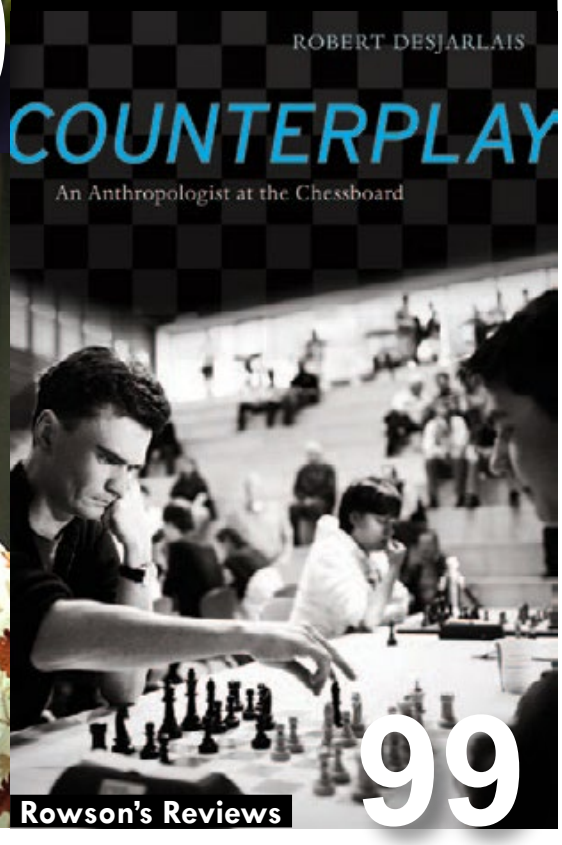
At 16 he dropped out of school to be a chess player. Today he is an international economist consulted by political leaders and policy makers all over the world. In the meantime his passion for chess has not dwindled, as Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam found out.



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COVER PHOTO
Magnus Carlsen: New In Chess

NIC's Café

The New World Order

Just like last year Magnus Carlsen tops the January 1 rating list. The Norwegian earned enough points in Nanjing and London to edge out World Champion Vishy Anand, the leader of the previous list. With an Elo of 2814, Carlsen has 4 points more than 12 months ago. He reached his peak, with a 2826 rating, last summer. The new Top-10 is: 1. Carlsen (Norway), 2814; 2. Anand (India), 2810; 3. Aronian (Armenia), 2805; 4. Kramnik (Russia), 2784; 5. Karjakin (Russia), 2776; 6. Topalov (Bulgaria), 2775; 7. Grischuk (Russia), 2773; 8. Mamedyarov (Azerbaijan), 2772; 9. Ivanchuk (Ukraine), 2764; 10. Nakamura (USA), 2751.

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Armenia's Levon Aronian has firmly established himself among the 2800 elite.

The differences at the very top are small and it's hard to predict what the list will look like a year from now, with Aronian continuing to improve his position as a 2800-player and Karjakin, Grischuk, Mamedyarov and Nakamura peaking at the highest ratings in their careers.

NICiLeaks (1)

Hikaru Nakamura saw an old dream come true. Following a period of stable and strong play, the American number one entered the Top 10. In London he told us that one of the reasons for his recent progress was his better use of time. However, the downside of that progress was, as he specified, that he had become 'pretty much incapable of playing blitz anymore'. That was clearly a reference to the second fiddle the acclaimed speedster had to play at the World Blitz in Moscow and perhaps also to the private blitz marathon he held with Magnus Carlsen in the nightly hours after that championship. When we reported on that blitz extravaganza in our previous issue, we didn't know that Nakamura had asked the brain behind that battle, American journalist Macauley Peterson, not to divulge the final result. We only found out when we read Peterson's account in Chess Life Online. In his account he also mentioned his little notebook (the ones you write in with pen or pencil) and the score he had kept. When Peterson in turn read our impressions from the Carlsen-Nakamura marathon, he noticed that the final score we had given (provided by him, in case you wonder) was wrong! Checking his notes he pointed out that Carlsen had not scored plus 9, but plus 7, which after 40 games amounted to 23½-16½ in the Norwegian's favour.

NEW IN CHESS

The Moscow Marathon. American journalist Macauley Peterson is the man in the mirror keeping a close watch on Nakamura and Carlsen.

NICiLeaks (2)

In this time and age, when the leading leakers of the world tell us that the average citizen is entitled to know everything that is happening behind the scenes, we are not sure how reasonable Nakamura's request to keep the score secret was. The match certainly was a private one, but on the other hand, it was a moment of historical importance that most chess fans would like to be informed about.

Fortunately, another blitz match, albeit of considerably smaller proportions, was held in the VIP-room of the London Chess Classic under the eyes of countless possible leakers, soothing our conscience for reporting it. In fact, we don't want to ignore it, as it was so wildly entertaining and so clearly enjoyed by both contestants. After he had lost to the World Champion in Round 4 due to a grave mistake in an unclear position, Nigel Short had come in looking for a way to unwind. The medicine he went for was a series of blitz games against David Norwood, a retired English grandmaster, who lives part of the year in Andorra these days, enjoying the money he made as a financial expert (in case you read Ken Rogoff's interview in this issue, Norwood started to work for Bankers Trust in 1991). The historical importance of this clash was due to the fact that the players are of approximately the same age and hail from

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The 'World Championship of Northern England' between David Norwood and Nigel Short is briefly interrupted by Malcolm Pein, who asks them to curb their enthusiasm. On the left an amused Michael Basman.

the same geographical region, causing kibitzing IM Ali Mortazavi to dub the encounter 'the World Championship of Northern England'. The start of the match was hilarious. Short's hand was not as steady as he might have hoped in this attempt to play away his frustration and before he knew it he was down 3-0, one game seeing a turnaround so bizarre that we feel highly incompetent for not being able to reproduce it here. Only then did the former World Championship Challenger rise to the occasion, and after seven games he had bent the score to his advantage, 4-3. By that time tournament director Malcolm Pein had come in so often, imploring the players to be more quiet, that they agreed to call it a day.

Armageddon: Black or White?

And now that we're talking about blitz, we might as well tackle a question that is faced by an increasing number of professional chess players: what colour should you choose when you have the choice before an Armageddon game? In case you're not interested in the correct answer, you should definitely ask either Sergey Karjakin or Ian Nepomniachtchi!

The Russian Super Final, held last

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Armageddon again: experts Ian Nepomniachtchi and Sergey Karjakin.

December, was decided in a play-off, as you can read in Mark Glukhovsky's inside report in this issue. First two rapid games were played between the two top-finishers, the afore-mentioned Karjakin and Nepomniachtchi, and when these had both ended in draws (although Karjakin had the initiative in both) an Armageddon game had to decide on the title. For those who have forgotten: White gets more time (mostly 6 against 5 minutes or 5 against 4 minutes) but has to win, while Black 'wins' both in case of a win and a draw. Thinking over the chances for both sides, you'd be inclined to believe that being Black is more promising. In any case, almost everyone in Moscow was surprised when Karjakin won the toss and chose to play white! The Armageddon game ended in a draw and in interviews, new champion Nepomniachtchi expressed his gratitude towards Karjakin for his remarkable preference.

Students of the subject will be delighted to hear that in early January the same Karjakin and Nepomniachtchi played a revenge match at the invitation of Vasily Zhukov, the dean of the Russian State Social University and President of the Moscow Chess Federation. And guess what? The first two rapid games ended in one victory for each player and the next four drawn blitz games inevitably led to another Armageddon game. This time the choice was Nepomniachtchi's, and it will not surprise you at all that he chose to play with... the white pieces! Needless to say, the game ended in a draw and Karjakin had his revenge.

14 Years, 3 Months and 2 Days

Ukraine has always been fertile ground for young and promising chess players. During the final days of 2010, Ilya Nyzhnyk followed in the footsteps of legendary predecessors such as Ruslan Ponomariov and Sergey Karjakin, when he scored his final grandmaster norm in Groningen, finishing in a six-way tie for first. Bulgarian GM Dejan Bojkov was declared the winner of the festival, but Nyzhnyk became the youngest grandmaster in the world at the age of 14 years, 3 months and 2 days. In the list of youngest GMs of all time, still led by Karjakin (12 years and 7 months flat), Nyzhnyk now occupies 11th place.

The boy from Vinnitsia, a city of 500,000 in the Ukraine, is trained by Kiev grandmaster Vladimir Baklan.

NEW IN CHESS

Ilya Nyzhnyk is now the youngest Grandmaster in the world.

Vladimir Kramnik is his favourite player. Asked about his general ambitions in chess, he flatly answered: 'My aim is to become World Champion.' ■

COLOPHON

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Your Move

Petrosian's last game

In New in Chess 2010/8 Genna Sosonko writes on page 37: 'Six months before he (Petrosian) died he played in the Interpolis tournament in Holland ...' I am a great fan of Genna Sosonko, but this time his memory has betrayed him. Petrosian's last appearance in Tilburg was in October 1982, twenty months (not six) before he died. His last international tournament was Niksic, September-October 1983.

With unchanged regard,

Claudio Bettalli
Prato, Italy

Botvinnik's international debut

According to Igor Botvinnik's letter in New In Chess 2010/7 his great uncle made his international debut in Hastings 1934/35. This statement can also be found in some Russian books, for instance in *Shakhmatnyi Slovar* (Moscow 1964, p.206). But in 1926 there was a match Stockholm-Leningrad, where Botvinnik won on the 5th board over Gösta Stoltz (+1=1). Botvinnik's first duels with foreigners (not mentioning his win over Capablanca in 1925) were probably his simultaneous games in Helsinki on the way to Stockholm. Botvinnik wrote about it in all editions of his memoirs.

Dmitry Gorodin
Via email

Postscript Igor Botvinnik

Dmitry Gorodin is absolutely right when he writes about Mikhail Botvinnik's first games abroad. This fact is well known.

However, when I wrote about Botvinnik's debut abroad I was referring to his first tournament abroad. Without any doubt Hastings was his first tournament abroad, a debut of great significance. You may find it interesting to know that when Botvinnik played in Hastings, a postcard with Botvinnik's portrait at the chess board was published in the Soviet Union with the following text: 'USSR Chess Champion comrade Botvinnik is participating in the international chess tournament in Hastings (England). This is Botvinnik's first appearance abroad (TASS).'

This portrait was published in the last edition of Botvinnik's memoirs *Achieving the Aim*, edited for the last time by the author personally in December 1994.

This book was published in Russian in 1997 and never published in English. According to Botvinnik's estimate the content differed approximately for 15-20% in comparison with the previous edition.

Igor Bondarevsky

In his review of Yasser Seirawan's new book in New In Chess 2010/8, Hans Ree quotes the story of Spassky and his trainer, and the Soviet lady player seeking their advice. In both the book and the review, this trainer is named as Isaac Boleslavsky. However, the latter was never Spassky's trainer. I suspect that he has been confused with Igor Bondarevsky, who was actually the 10th world champion's long-time trainer.

It can be dangerous to confuse these two similar-sounding names. There is another story, concerning a grandmaster who shall remain nameless, who was his country's non-playing captain at the 1994 Olympiad in Moscow. During one of his idle afternoons, he made the acquaintance of the daughter of Igor Bondarevsky, and was quite smitten with her. His efforts to befriend her were proceeding quite well, until he made the terrible blunder of saying: 'Your father was a really great player. His Sicilian variation is the basis of all these modern systems with e7-e5, such as the Najdorf and Sveshnikov.' The outraged lady screamed: 'That wasn't my father, that was Boleslavsky!' and then stormed off, leaving our Grandmaster hero contemplating the ruin of his amorous ambitions! All of which just goes to show the value of knowing one's opening theory, I suppose...

Steve Giddins
Rochester, United Kingdom

The effect of the game

Thank you for publishing parts of my letter in New in Chess 2010/7. Unfortunately, the edited version gives a completely misleading and inaccurate idea of abilities that are developed through playing chess. The first four qualities – kindness, knowledge, honesty and the ability to work with others – are cardinal virtues, not necessarily developed through chess. In fact, the fourth one can often be impaired through chess playing! These four qualities are to be developed in the general life experience of the individual. The chessic abilities are: analytical power, decision making and the ability to resist pressure. If these qualities are developed through chess they can be bolted on to the other four, thus producing a truly effective person. This is the gist of my thesis. I have presented my ideas on this in the article 'Saving the World' (which can be found here: marshtowers.blogspot.com/2008.11.01.archive.html – ed.) Hopefully this article will start a debate on the traits developed through playing chess. After all, if we are trying to promote the game to the general public and, in particular, to young players, we should have dwelt carefully upon the effect the game has on character.

Michael Basman
Chessington, United Kingdom

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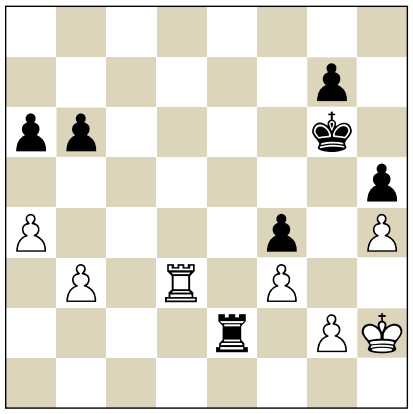
Our analysis

We like rook endgames and we don't understand Jan Timman's analysis in New In Chess 2010/8 of the endgame Gelfand-Shirov. The draw that Mr Timman indicates is not a draw and the variation by Dvoretsky that he cites is also wrong. Mr. Dvoretsky gives a drawing line that actually loses. We send you our analysis.



Gelfand-Shirov
Moscow Tal Memorial 2010 (2)

Gelfand has liquidated into an ending in which he has an extra pawn. **43.♖d6+ ♔f5 44.♖xb6 ♖e6** Here Mr Timman gives 44...a5!? as a way to draw for Black, because of 45.♖b5+ ♖e5, but after 46.b4 axb4 47.♖xb4 ♖e1 48.♖b5+ ♔g6 49.♖g5+ ♔h6 50.♖f5 White wins **45.a5!** At this point he cites Dvoretsky, who wrote that an immediate swap would result in a draw and gives as his main line: 45.♖xe6? (the question marks are ours) 45...♔xe6 46.g3 fxg3+?? (both 46...a5!? and 46...♔d5!? 47.gxf4 a5 48.♔g3 ♔d4 49.f5 ♔e5 50.♔f2 ♔d4! should lead to a draw) 47.♔xg3 a5 48.♔f4 ♔f6, but now 49.♔e3 leads to a win for White instead of 49.b4?? axb4 50.♔e4 g5 51.hxg5+ ♔g6 with a draw, as Dvoretsky is quoted.
Thank you for the best chess magazine !

Marc Casale
Philippe Bouchoux
Brunoy, France

Postscript Jan Timman:

Thanks for the analysis, you are right.

The publishing industry is given to what Auberon Waugh once called 'sudden frenzies of mindless change'. Bad omens for such changes usually are a declining circulation, a nervous new owner or freshly appointed executives who feel the need to make their mark.

None of this is behind the present changes in New In Chess. Our circulation is up, the company has not been sold, and I am very happy that the same staff are still running the business.

26 years ago, when we introduced the magazine format that became one of our trademarks (and in the meantime has been copied by quite a few other chess publications, a compliment we gladly accept), the world was different. Printing technology, photograph quality and improved desktop publishing programs, to name just a few factors, have created so many new possibilities that, frankly, the small format started to feel as an encumbrance.

I hope you will continue to enjoy New In Chess.
We believe it hasn't changed; it has just become better.

Sincerely,

Allard Hoogland, Publisher

‘If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.’ ‘Leave well enough alone.’ ‘Never change a running system.’ Tournament director Malcolm Pein must have a book of synonyms with a special chapter on the wisdom of not meddling with a successful formula. And who is going to argue with that? The second edition of the London Chess Classic repeated everything that made the first one so memorable and enjoyable, rightly assuming that the difference would be made by the addition of World Champion Vishy Anand and the new games the grandmasters were going to delight us with. And although the winner’s name also remained the same, the way Magnus Carlsen repeated last year’s victory turned out to be an entirely different story.

Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam

London is

Returning to the London Chess Classic was like undergoing one long déjà vu. The venue, the Olympiad Conference Centre in Kensington, was the same, the staff were the same friendly people from last year and the field was almost identical. On the walls the same colourful portraits were smiling down on the spectators, with one exception: Chinese GM Ni Hua had been replaced by World Champion Vishy Anand. For the rest the format remained the same: the four best English grandmasters were pitted in an individual competition against four world-class players.

In the commentary room nothing had changed either. The same formidable team of commentators treated the room to their daily overdose of unbeatable English humour, while never forgetting to provide clarifying chess insight. The VIP-room remained another delightful place to sit down for a moment and listen to the never-ending conversation between star-commentator Julian Hodgson and guest-of-honour Viktor Kortchnoi, who simply had resumed their

CHRISTIAN SASSE

As part of the Chess in Schools and Communities project every day schools from all over the country visited the London Chess Classic, and pupils were invited to make the first move as in the game between Magnus Carlsen and Hikaru Nakamura.

Carlsen's call

NEW IN CHESS

captivating verbal duels where they left off last year. And dashing in and out of all these rooms, as we remembered him from last year, was tournament director Malcolm Pein, always driven by something pressing, giving orders here and there, constantly eager to briefly comment on one of the games, and in a quick aside urging me not to forget to write about the vastly expanding Chess in Schools and Communities project, because that is 'in fact what all this is about'.

Even the name of the winner was the same as last year. But there the differences start creeping in. Instead of the €25,000 that he took home after the first edition, Magnus Carlsen now pocketed double that amount thanks to a €25,000 increase of the overall prize-fund to €145,000. Moreover, the Norwegian's route to victory was dramatically different. In 2009, Carlsen started with a bang when in the first round he defeated Vladimir Kramnik and defended his lead till the final day, when the sum-total of three wins and four draws was 13 points thanks to the football scoring system of 3 points for a win. This time his first game also attracted considerable attention when his risky and ambitious opening play was masterfully and ruthlessly punished by Luke McShane. Carlsen crawled back to his feet in the second round with a good win over Michael Adams, only to be knocked down again in Round 3 in a gripping fight against the World Champion. With an untypical fingerfehler Vishy Anand lost the initiative in the opening, but in the ensuing complications he took command again and after a long and ferocious fight Carlsen had to resign for a second time. And again he showed the resilience of a champion, winning his next two games against Hikaru Nakamura and David Howell. Still, everything seemed to have been in vain when in the penultimate round he was outplayed by his nemesis Vladimir Kramnik. There were several moments when Carlsen considered resigning and Kramnik expected him to do so. However, as we all know, few chess players really give in to such temptations and indeed, Carlsen also plodded on. He knew full well that he was still lost but tenaciously clung on to his last hopes: 'I needed to always let him play one more move.' One more move became another and another move till the miracle happened and Carlsen escaped with a draw. Looking back he admitted that another loss against Kramnik would have been very painful, but he probably was right when he observed that failing to win this position was even more painful for Kramnik.

> Thanks to this unlikely escape and the football scoring system Carlsen was still very much in business with one round to go.

Indeed, the Russian number one called this the bleakest moment of the tournament. His loss in Round 2 against Hikaru Nakamura was something he could live with. There he had gambled with an adventurous piece sacrifice, hoping to double the three points he had won against Nigel Short in the first round. Already much more painful was the draw he made from a winning position in Round 3 against McShane, but the disaster against Carlsen was the pits. As Kramnik put it: 'I should have scored plus-three, which is a serious result in such a tournament. Objectively speaking, I have no reason to be unhappy with my play but I should stop giving points to my nearest rivals like I did against Aronian in Moscow. The game against Carlsen was of course the limit of stupidity, like blundering mate in one against the computer. Something unthinkable. If you give me five minutes I would win this position 10 out of 10. I think I have some concentration lapses and I have to find out why they happen. I don't remember any of my rivals spoiling such a chance in the past two years. But the real drama would be if I fail to win a decisive game in the Candidates in this way.'

Thanks to this unlikely escape and the football scoring system Carlsen was still very much in business with one round to go. With the traditional scoring system he would have been in shared third place with Kramnik and Nakamura, trailing Anand and McShane by half a point. As it was, he was sharing first place with Anand and McShane, one point ahead of Kramnik and Nakamura. What's more, the pairings for the final round clearly favoured him. With five players still vying for overall victory, Carlsen seemed to be best off playing White against out-of-form Nigel Short. Anand was facing Kramnik, while Nakamura was White against the solid Adams and McShane had to beat Howell with the black pieces.

Inevitably the scoring system stirred up some heated discussions, which will continue for some time to come. For the moment we'll side with one of the participants who would have been better off with the traditional system: 'We all knew that this system was going to be applied, so it doesn't make much sense to complain afterwards.' And we should quote Carlsen, who profited most: 'Certainly this time it worked out for me. One thing, which Garry (Kasparov) also pointed out last year, is that to combine the football score and the Sofia rules is a little bit dubious. Because then you both encourage people to fight and reward them less if the game ends in a draw.

But to have one or the other, I think, is fine.'

In the final round the first game to end was Anand-Kramnik. The World Champion was happy to be back in London, where he had last played in 1995. He left with generally positive feelings, although he thought it was a bit funny that he scored plus-two, remained undefeated, beat the ultimate winner and yet didn't even come close to winning a seven-round event.

For Kramnik the final day was an ordeal. The night before a visit to a restaurant had resulted in a severe case of food poisoning. After a sleepless night he felt so bad that he would have forfeited his game if it hadn't played a role in the fight for first place. He was relieved that he managed to get a position in which he could almost play on auto-pilot. Immediately after the draw he returned to his hotel room, where he spent the next 24 hours mostly sleeping.

By the time Anand and Kramnik finished their game, the situation already looked bleak for Short in his encounter with Carlsen. During the last round Garry Kasparov paid a visit to the London Chess Classic. Before he went to an autograph session in the foyer, Kasparov had a look at the games in the VIP-room. Remarkably enough, he barely looked at the key game of the day, and when Hodgson asked him what he thought of Carlsen-Short, Kasparov huffed 'I lost interest in that game after 11 moves.' Did he think White was winning?, Hodgson enquired. Kasparov huffed again, summed up the characteristics of the position and left it to the people around him to draw their own conclusions. When someone suggested age was catching up with Short, he shot back: 'It's got nothing to do with age. He should work!'

Interestingly enough, this view was shared by Short himself when he looked back on his disappointing performance. As he literally put it: 'I've not been working on chess this year and it sort of caught up with me.' The crucial moments were his game against McShane in Round 2, where he lost from a winning position, and the game two days later against Anand, in which he blundered in a perfectly reasonable position. And he made an observation that he also made in our report on last year's Classic: 'The difference between being in reasonable form and being in bad form is not as great as people think. It manifests itself in certain moves.'

As Carlsen sat enjoying his winning position, it was clear that a win would almost certainly yield him clear first place, as both Nakamura and McShane had failed to pose real threats. Nakamura drew against Adams and was 'fairly happy' with his result. Of course he still regretted the missed opportunity against McShane in the penultimate round, which essentially put an end to his chances to take first place, but all in all he was satisfied with the progress he has been making in elite events. One of the things he has learned is how to use his time. Sometimes these days he even ends up in time-trouble! The downside of his thinking longer and playing more slowly is that he feels he is 'pretty much incapable of playing blitz anymore'. But as classical chess is most important for him, he believes it's a good development that will hopefully soon help him fulfil one of his ambitions: winning one of the super tournaments.

The final candidate who could still have spoiled Carlsen's party, McShane, didn't even seem close to claiming that role. His position against Howell looked suspect, and shortly before the time-control the youngest British participant even had the opportunity to deal a deadly blow. When he failed to spot this chance the game ended in

Having defeated Magnus Carlsen and Nigel Short in the opening rounds, Luke McShane became the crowd's favourite at the Olympiad Conference Centre. In various games he came close to losing, but the Englishman remained unbeaten and shared second place with World Champion Vishy Anand. 'I was in serious danger in some games, but on the other hand I did a good job of making my luck as well.'

move repetition. Funnily, McShane, still fully engrossed in the fight, at first contested the claim of his opponent that it was a draw, and it was only after he had cooled down a bit that he realized that a draw was really the most he could hope for.

If Kramnik was the most unfortunate participant in London, then McShane was certainly the luckiest one, surviving three lost positions (actually scoring 5 out of 3 in those!). But just like Kramnik had the right professional attitude and was determined to find out why he had missed so many chances, McShane could not be blamed for agreeing that luck favours the strong: 'You can certainly argue that I was lucky, and to an extent I was, but on the other hand I also played better than I ever had before. I took a lot of chances and the fact that I have five draws doesn't reflect the chances that I took. I was in serious danger in some games, but on the other hand I did a good job of making my luck as well.'

After he beat Carlsen and Short in the first rounds, McShane was in the lead till the very last day. He thoroughly enjoyed playing in front of a partisan audience that cheered him on at the start of one of the rounds with a well-meant 'Come on Luke!' and spent so much energy that at the end of some of the games he needed some time to return to earth again. Last year he expressed his doubts about his future, not knowing for sure if he should continue to work in the world of finance or return to chess. He still hasn't made up his mind. His recent results have been encouraging and he feels in good shape: 'Things are very good. I haven't committed myself to chess for the rest of my life, but for the next couple of months I will be playing chess, starting with Wijk aan Zee B.' Touching on the inevitable hard work that professional chess requires he said something that may reveal the real reason why he has been doing so well lately: 'I still find that in chess there is as much in getting inspiration as in putting in hours. If you work on chess if you're not really in the mood you won't get that much out of it. It's still more important to keep a passion for the game.'

On his 40th move Magnus Carlsen pushed his a-pawn to one square from promotion. Nigel Short briefly looked at the position and extended his hand to congratulate his opponent. Carlsen's second win at the London Chess Classic was the fruit of willpower and an inbred refusal to give up.

With his 40th move, pushing his a-pawn to one square from promotion, Magnus Carlsen forced Nigel Short's resignation. An admirable demonstration of willpower and an inbred refusal to give up yielded the 20-year-old Norwegian a second victory in the London Chess Classic. In the process he collected enough rating points to regain the top position in the world rankings, a position he had got attached to and was eager to reclaim. Contrary to Anand, who said that this was something more likely to interest the fans and that for him it made no difference whether he won a tournament in December or in January, Carlsen stressed that it mattered to him – if only because it was a gratifying way to end a year that he described as 'not that great a year for me'. That may sound conceited given the fact that he won first prize in Wijk aan Zee, Nice, Bazna, Nanjing and London (in fact the only tournament he played in that he didn't win was Bilbao, which he considers reason enough to think that he also deserves to win the 2010 Chess Oscar), but it pre-eminently shows his striving for perfection. In the past year Carlsen discovered his vulnerability, and he wants to learn from it and bounce back: 'I haven't been playing such great chess lately. At some point I got used to winning. I guess I just get more relaxed when I am playing well. When things are not going too well, I lose a bit of confidence. I think it happens to everyone. It's not always easy to strike back, especially if you strike back and then get knocked down again. As happened in this tournament, for example.'

Being knocked down for a second time was especially painful because it happened against one of his main rivals, Anand. But other losses hurt as well: 'The answer would be the same

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if you asked Vishy or Kramnik or whomever. I just hate losing.'

Did he have problems concentrating or was he feeling pressure because of the decision not to play the Candidates' matches? 'Maybe a bit. It was more in Nanjing actually, because I thought if I played a bad tournament there and then withdrew, it would just seem like cold feet. But now I don't think too much about it, certainly not during tournaments.'

And a final word on the football scoring system? (With a grin) 'It's not that in this tournament I lost two games because I knew I could come back, but it did help me that this possibility existed.'

NOTES BY
Magnus Carlsen

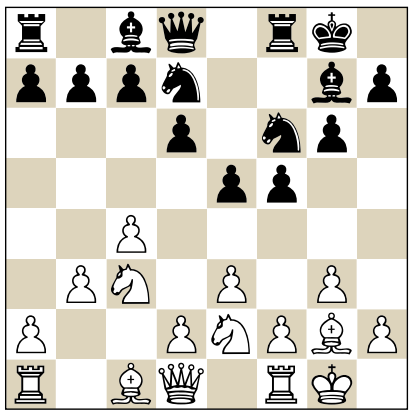
HD 14.4 – A21
Magnus Carlsen
Hikaru Nakamura
London 2010 (4)

1.c4 f5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 d6 4.♘c3 g6 5.e3

After a less than perfect start it seemed appropriate not to discuss topical theory today, even in the Dutch Defence.

5...♗g7 6.♘ge2 0-0 7.0-0 e5 8.b3 ♘bd7

8...♘c6 would lead to a well-known position from the Closed Sicilian, with White a tempo up, obviously. Whether the extra tempo actually makes a difference is an entirely different matter, of course.



9.d3

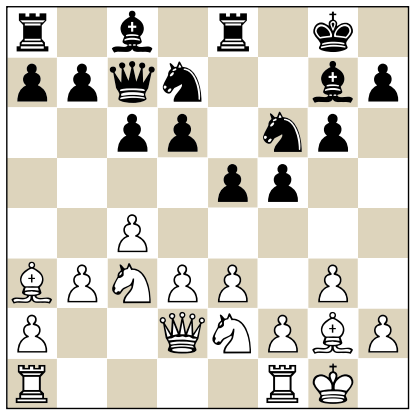
I thought it would be sensible to postpone the development of the bishop, and for that purpose I also prepared another waiting move, ♕d2. I thought that d4 here or on the next few moves would be wrong, as Black can simply answer ...e4. I would then have to play f3 and later try to get e4 in, but it seemed to me that Black is always ready for this.

9...c6 10.♗a3 ♕c7

10...♕e7 is also possible, but it makes sense not to put the queen in the white bishop's range.

11.♕d2 ♖e8

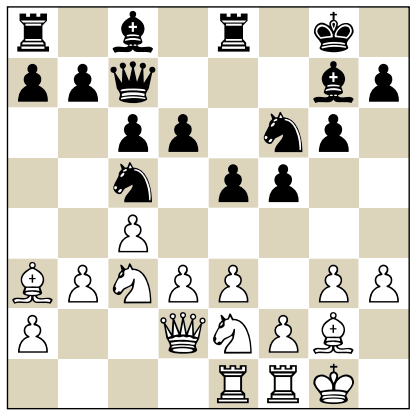
White is well prepared for a pawn storm on the kingside, as ...g5 can always be met by f4. Therefore, putting this rook on e8, and later the other one on d8, makes perfect sense.



12.♖ae1

I was very unsure of where to put the rook. Basically, White has three ways of breaking in the centre: d4, e4 and f4. As I said, I felt that d4 is usually not very good. Clearly, the rook would be better placed on the d-file if I'm going to play e4, but I think Black is well prepared for this: 12.♖ad1 ♘c5 13.e4 (13.d4 ♘ce4 14.♘xe4 ♘xe4 15.♕c2 ♘f6! 16.d5 c5 looks excellent for Black) 13...a5 (13...f4!?, with the idea of 14.gxf4 ♗h6 15.d4 ♘e6! 16.dxe5 dxe5 17.♗d6 ♕f7 18.♗xe5 ♘h5, also might be interesting) 14.exf5 (this was the idea behind my previous move; maybe 14.h3, which would be very useful in the following line, would be more prudent, but then the ...f4!? idea becomes even more tempting for Black) 14...♗xf5 15.d4 ♘d3 16.h3 h5, and Black is just too active.

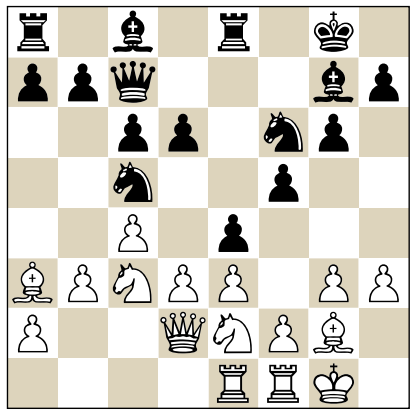
12...♘c5 13.h3



I was very happy with this prophylactic move. The problem with the immediate 13.f4 is 13...e4 14.♗xc5 dxc5 15.dxe4 fxe4 16.h3 h5, when the e4 pawn cannot be won and White is stuck with a relatively passive position due to the cramping effect of that very same pawn. With the pawn already on h3, it all would be very different, as White would then have g4, followed by either ♘g3 or g5, rounding up the e4 pawn.

13...e4

My opponent decides to simplify the position a bit, possibly due to the fact that he had already spent quite a bit of time. Mobilizing the rest of his army with 13...♗d7 14.f4 a5 was obviously quite reasonable as well, when Black is quite OK.



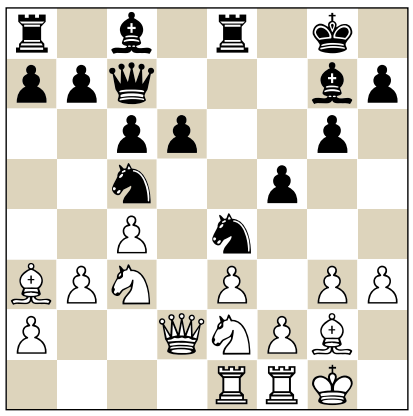
14.dxe4

14.♗xc5 dxc5 15.dxe4 fxe4 16.g4 looks much less convincing now that the white pawn is not on f4, but even here Black has to act quickly because ♘g3 is coming: 16...♕e5 (16...♗xg4 17.hxg4 ♘xg4 18.♘g3 ♕e7 is something I didn't see at all during the

game, and is probably worse due to 19.♗h3 ♘e5 20.♕c2 ♘f3+ 21.♔g2 ♘xe1+ 22.♖xe1 ♗xc3 23.♕xc3 and White must be better) 17.♖d1 (17.♘g3 ♘xg4) 17...h5 18.gxh5 ♕xh5, and I thought that Black must be doing quite well. True, the engines point out 19.♕d6, when 19...♗xh3 is met by 20.♘f4, but the follow-up with ♕h2 somehow fails to convince me...

14...♘fxe4

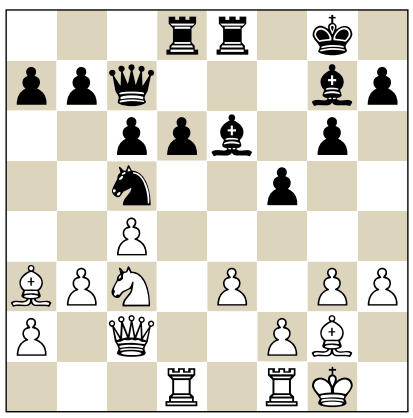
14...fxe4 15.♖d1 ♗f8 16.g4 is clearly not to be recommended for Black.



15.♕c2

15.♘xe4 ♘xe4 16.♗xe4 fxe4 17.♗xd6 ♕f7 18.♔h2 g5 gives plenty of compensation for the pawn, and is not something to enter when there is a very reasonable alternative.

15...♘xc3 16.♘xc3 ♗e6 17.♖d1 ♖ad8

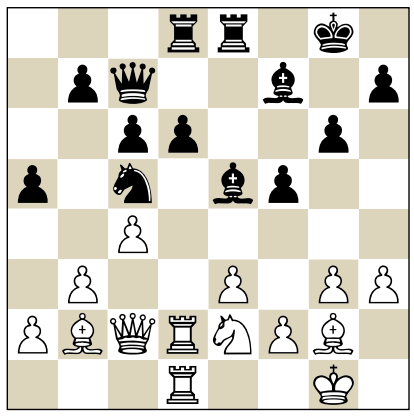


Now we have reached a type of position which is quite typical for the Leningrad Dutch. It looks a little better for White, who has no real weaknesses and a harmonious enough position, but in reality it's probably closer to equal, as Black has enough influence in the centre, and his only weakness on d6 can be easily defended.

18.♗b2 ♗f7 19.♖d2

While the d6 pawn is certainly not falling any time soon, piling up the rooks on the d-file to keep Black on his toes certainly can't hurt.

19...a5 20.♖fd1 ♗e5 21.♘e2



21...a4

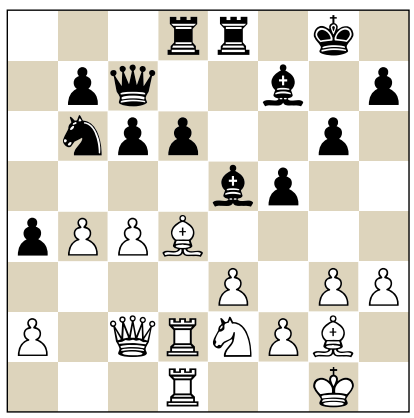
Hikaru, true to his style, decides to sharpen the game a bit. With a weakness on b3 I would certainly not have anything real, so in a sense my next move is forced.

On 21...♕b6 White plays 22.♗c3.

22.b4 ♘d7

Alternatively, 22...♗xb2 23.♕xb2 ♘e4 24.♗xe4 fxe4 (on 24...♖xe4, 25.c5 d5 26.♘c3 wins a pawn) 25.♕c2 seems to leave Black with more weaknesses than White, and Black is not active enough to exploit the absence of my g2 bishop.

23.♗d4 ♘b6 An interesting point, as White has three different options.



24.♗xb6

The second option, 24.♗xe5 dxe5 25.♖xd8 ♖xd8 26.♖xd8+ ♕xd8 27.c5 ♘c4 28.♕xa4 ♕d2 clearly isn't worth going for, misplacing the queen and activating the black pieces is too high a price for the a-pawn.

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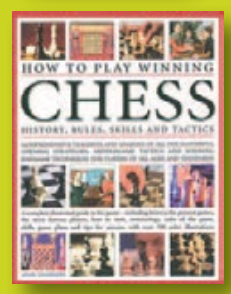

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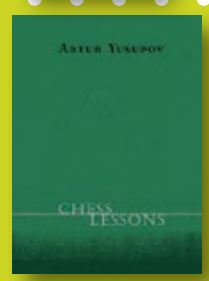

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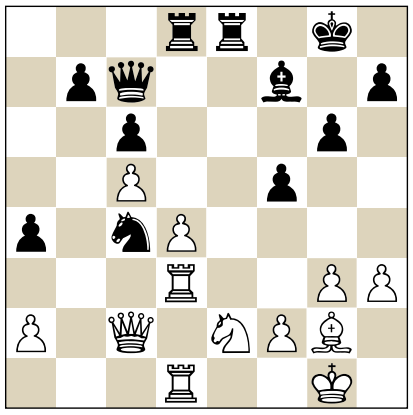
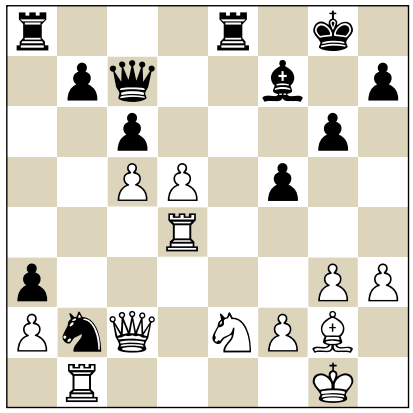
Immediately after the game Magnus Carlsen and Hikaru Nakamura joined Jonathan Rowson and Stephen Gordon in the commentary room, where even the loser was soon laughing.

However, 24.c5 is rather more demanding for Black, and something I considered very seriously: 24...dxc5 25.bxc5 ♘c4 26.♖d3 ♗xd4 27.exd4 (27.♖xd4 ♕a5! is very much OK for Black).



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

Now Black will have to act quickly, as if the black knight gets kicked out from c4 or White gets in d5, Black will be in serious trouble: 27...a3! (27...♕a5 is also quite interesting, as 28.♖c3 can now be met with 28...♖xe2. However, White will now have time to get in a3 and deny the black knight the b2-square: 28.♖b1 ♖e7 29.a3! ♖de8 30.♗f1, and White is very close to achieving something real) 28.♖b1 (28.d5 ♘b2) 28...♖a8! (the only move as otherwise 29.♖c3 would be very unpleasant. Now, however, Black seems to have enough counterplay with precise play) 29.d5 ♘b2 30.♖d4. I stopped around here, as I could not really figure out what was going on, and the game continuation looked quite good. Additionally, this is the kind of messy position my opponent is considered to excel in. However, the position is quite dangerous for Black if White can coordinate his pieces:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

30...♖e5! (30...♖ad8 31.d6 ♕a5 32.♘c1 – the only move – 32...♖e1+ 33.♔h2 with ♘b3 to come looks good for White; 30...♕e5 31.dxc6!; 30...cxd5 31.♗xd5 ♗xd5 32.♖xd5 ♕f7 33.♘f4 ♖ad8 34.♕b3, and the position looks promising for White) 31.♘f4 (Black is slightly better after 31.♘c3 ♕a5 32.dxc6 bxc6 33.♗xc6 ♕xc5 34.♗xa8 ♕xd4) 31...♕a5 32.♔h2 ♖ae8 33.h4, with a complicated position, but it's probably easier to play for White.

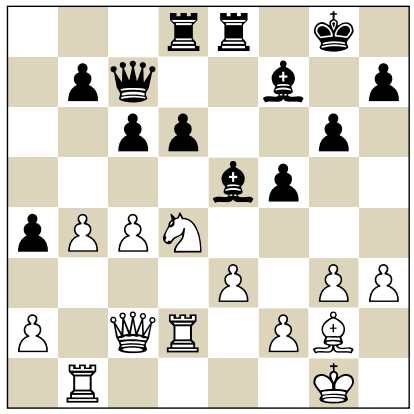
24...♕xb6 25.♖b1

Now the game has changed character a bit. Black has gained a serious asset, the bishop pair, but in return my bishop has become quite a bit stronger, especially in connection with b5 at some point. Additionally, while I always have to watch out for ...♗xg3 if the knight moves, the white king will almost certainly be the safer one when the position inevitably opens up.

25...♕c7

25...a3 was a sharper, but not very good try: 26.♘d4 (otherwise ...♗b2 might be unpleasant) 26...d5 (the point, now that the knight has been lured to d4) 27.c5 ♕c7 28.b5, and White is clearly on top.

26.♘d4



26...♖c8! A nice prophylactic move. The immediate 26...♕e7 would be considerably weaker due to 27.b5, when the white squares in the black camp are really soft.

27.♖c1 Now I'm threatening to take the a4 pawn.

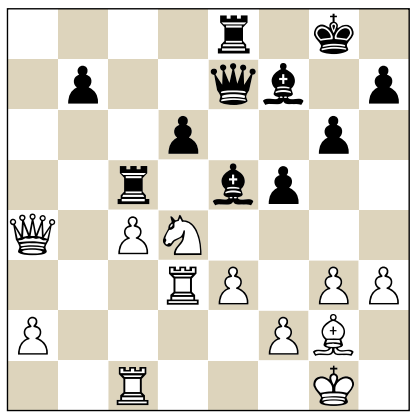
27...♕e7 28.♖d3

The alternative 28.♕xa4 would obviously fail to 28...♗xg3.

28...c5!

It turned out that that there was also another idea connected with ...♖c8. It is also essentially the only move, as 28...♖a8 29.b5 leaves Black under serious positional pressure.

29.bxc5 ♖xc5 30.♕xa4



30...♖ec8?!

The most obvious move, which my opponent played very quickly. However, now White keeps some pressure without any risk.

30...d5 was more interesting: 31.♘e2 (31.♘f3 b5!) 31...dxc4 32.♖d7 ♖a5! 33.♕d1 ♕f6 34.♗xb7 ♖a7 35.♗f3 ♖xd7 36.♕xd7 ♖d8 37.♕b5 ♖d2, and Black should not lose.

31.♖b1! 31.♖b3 looks tempting, but after 31...♖xc4 32.♖xc4 ♖xc4 33.♕a8+ ♕f8 it's just a draw.

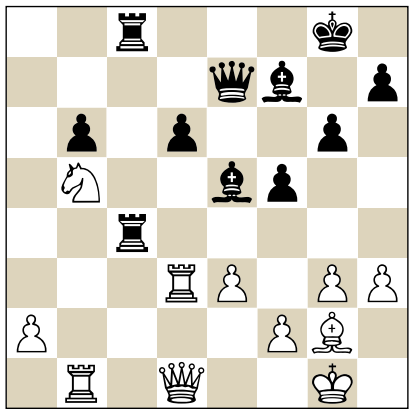
31...♖xc4 32.♕d1

Now Black has some problems, as White is once again well coordinated, and b7 and d6 are weak. Hikaru was also getting seriously short on time.

32...b6

Exchanging with 32...♗xd4 33.♖xd4 ♖xd4 34.♕xd4 ♕e5 35.♕b6 ♗xa2 36.♕xb7 ♗e6 37.♖d1 doesn't really solve all Black's problems either, as he will inevitably lose the d6 pawn.

33.♘b5



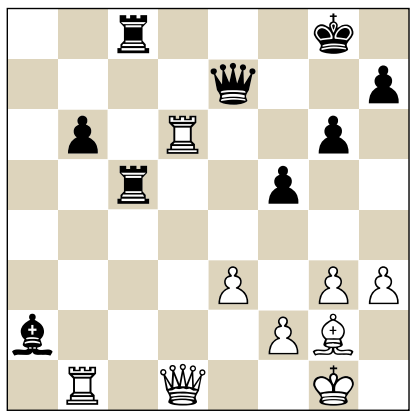
33...♖4c5?!

After the game 33...♖d8 was indicated by Hikaru as stronger: 34.f4 (34.a4 ♖c5 35.f4 ♗c4! 36.fxe5 ♗xd3 37.♕xd3 dxe5 38.♕e2 ♕d7 must be fine for Black) 34...♗f6 35.♘xd6 ♖c3 36.♖xb6 ♕c7 37.♖xc3 ♕xb6 (this is probably the strongest; 37...♕xc3 is what we looked at after the game, but here White keeps serious pressure with 38.♕e2 ♗d4! 39.exd4 ♕xd4+ 40.♕f2 ♖xd6 41.♖xd6 ♕xd6 42.♕f3! – 42.♕a7 g5 gives Black counterplay – and White will keep the extra pawn with winning chances) 38.♖d3 ♗xa2 39.♕d2 ♗e6 40.♘b5 ♖xd3 41.♕xd3, and while White can certainly try, it is unlikely that it's enough to win.

34.♘xd6

I have to take, as 34.♖d2 ♖d8, followed by ...d5, is just too little.

34...♗xd6 35.♖xd6 ♗xa2



36.♖a1

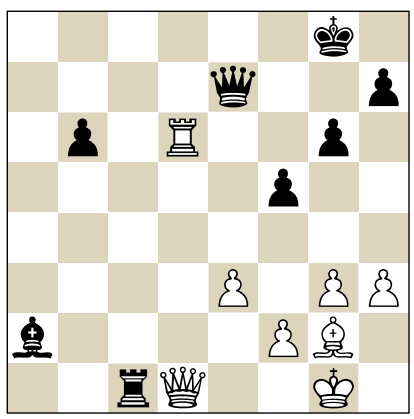
Now White will win a pawn.

36...♖c1

36...♗f7 37.♖xb6 also leaves Black with the cheerless task of defending a pawn down, although with real chances of success.

> 'Additionally, this is the kind of messy position my opponent is considered to excel in.'

37.♖xc1 ♖xc1



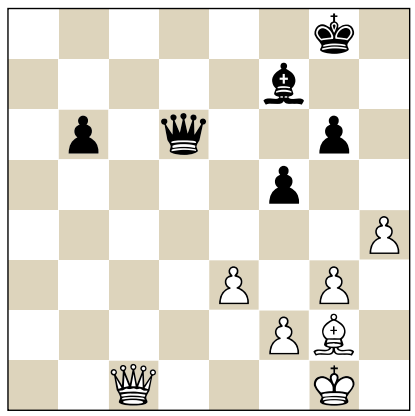
38.♖xg6+

Without this interpolation (which Hikaru had missed when he went for the line with ...♖4c5) it would obviously just have been a draw. Black still has drawing chances, but it's very difficult now.

38...hxg6 39.♕xc1 ♕d6 40.h4 ♗f7?!

After this typical 40th move inaccuracy Black is probably lost.

40...♗e6 was considerably more tenacious. Hikaru feared that an endgame after 41.♕c6 would be lost here, but I am still not sure about that. I would probably have gone for 41.e4 here, which is met by 41...fxe4 42.♗xe4 ♗f7, and it might still be within the drawing range.



41.h5! ♔h7

41...♕c5 is the move I had to calculate while making my last move. However, since the black passer will now be on c5, where it's considerably easier to approach for the white king, White must be winning now: 42.♕xc5 bxc5 43.hxg6 ♗xg6 44.♔f1 ♔f7 45.♔e2 ♔e7 46.f4 ♔d6 47.♔d3 ♗f7 48.e4 fxe4+ 49.♗xe4, and White wins.

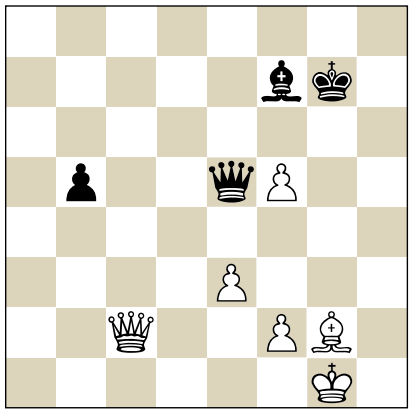
42.hxg6+ ♔xg6 43.♕c2 b5

43...♔f6 44.♕b2+ ♔g6 45.♗f3 can hardly be held either, as the black king is too weak for him to create any real counterplay.

44.g4 ♕e5

44...b4 45.♕xf5+ ♔g7 46.♕g5+ ♔f8 47.♗e4 b3 48.♕f5 b2 49.g5, and Black's pawn will not go any further, as ...♔g7, with the idea of ...♗g6, is met by ♕h7+.

45.gxf5+ ♔g7



46.♕e4!

Without this move, which kicks the black queen from its dominating position, it would not have been easy to win. It's not immediately apparent that the bishop ending is won, but as becomes clear in the game, the black pawn can be stopped.

46...♕d6 47.♕h4 ♗c4

47...b4 48.f6+ was the point of my previous move. Black has to take on f6, after which it's obviously plain sailing.

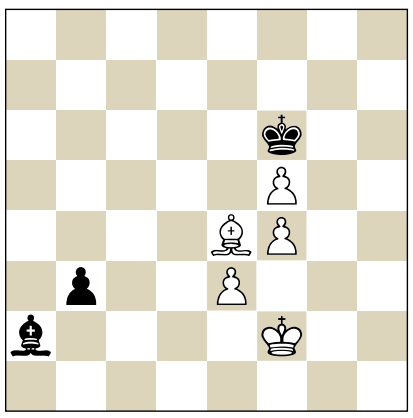
48.♗f3 ♕f6

48...♕e5 was the last try: 49.♕g5+ ♔f8 50.♕h6+ ♔e7 51.e4, and White will gradually win. Importantly, 51...b4 52.♕b6! b3 53.♕b4+ ♔d8 54.♕xc4 ♕a1+ 55.♔g2 b2 56.♕d5+ ♔c7 57.♕c5+ wins for White, for instance 57...♔d7 58.f6!, with ♗g4 to come.

49.♕xf6+ ♔xf6 50.♗e4

The endgame is easily winning, thanks to a little trick.

50...♗a2 51.f4 b4 52.♔f2 b3



53.♗d5! ♔xf5 54.♔f3 And there are no chances left for Black.

54...♔f6 55.e4 ♔g6 56.♔e3 ♔h5 57.♔d4 ♔g4 58.f5 ♔g5 59.♔e5

Black resigned.

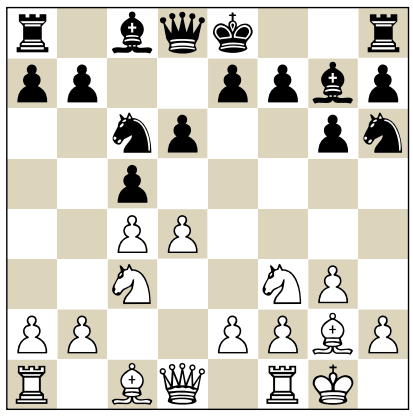
NOTES BY

Luke McShane

EO 28.9 – A37
Luke McShane
Magnus Carlsen
London 2010 (1)

I don't often get the opportunity to play in tournaments where I'm quite likely to end up with a minus score. Since I tend to have a lot of decisive games, that raises the grim prospect of a lot of losses if things go wrong at a tournament like the London Chess Classic. So naturally I was keen to start with a good game against Magnus. I'm sure it wasn't lost on him that my choice of 1.c4 was inspired by Magnus' own victory against Kramnik in the first round of London the year before. I remember David Bronstein visiting the Hastings Challengers tournament many years ago and playing the English Opening because, well, he was in England. At my young age, this amused me greatly, but also reinforced my impression that it was a solid opening best suited to old people. Now I'm a bit older, and I also know a bit more about chess, so I'm more receptive to the merits of this opening. I should add that Mihail Marin's triptych on the subject is beautifully written and inspirational.

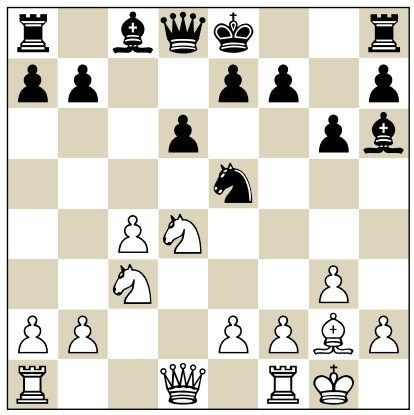
1.c4 c5 2.g3 g6 3.♗g2 ♗g7 4.♘c3 ♘c6 5.♘f3 d6 6.0-0 ♘h6 7.d4!?



A testing option. Flores-Carlsen at the Olympiad a couple of months before saw 7.b3 here.

7...cxd4 8.♗xh6 ♗xh6 9.♘xd4 ♘e5

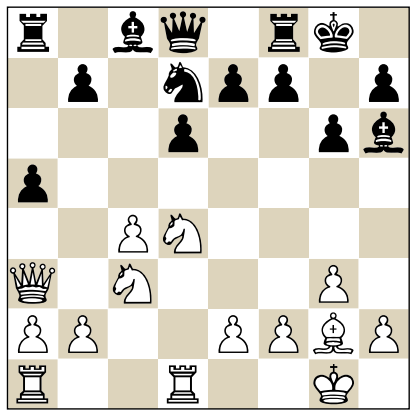
An ambitious choice, which is playable but objectively a little dubious in my opinion. This costs Black some time, both in terms of moving the knight and in the future as the queenside struggles to develop. But keeping the knights on makes it easier for Black to play for a win if he develops successfully. For that reason I felt it was crucial to preserve White's initiative by creating some threats, which explains my next few moves.



10.♕b3 0-0 11.♖fd1

A good square for the rook, with ideas of c5 followed by ♘f5.

11...♘d7 12.♕a3 a5

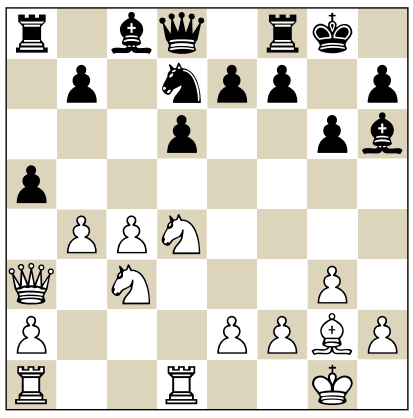


13.b4

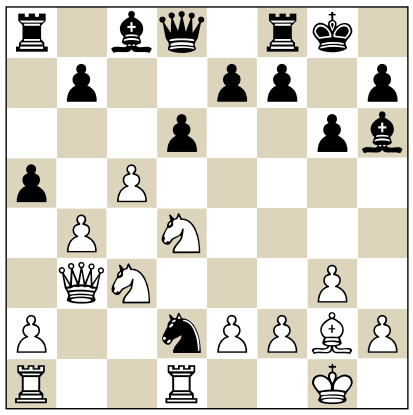
I sensed this was an important moment, and spent about half an hour deciding how to continue. I reckoned the key to the position was the advance c5, in order to develop White's initiative, which explains this double-edged move.

Another natural option I looked at was 13.♘a4, and indeed that might have been preferable: 13...♖a6 14.c5 dxc5 15.♘b5! puts Black under seri-

ous positional pressure (and is much stronger than 15.♘xc5 ♘xc5 16.♕xc5 ♖d6!, when Black is comfortable).
13.♘a4 ♕c7 is another possibility which we looked at in the commentary room after the game, but after 14.b3 preparing ♘b5, Black's position looks rather uncomfortable.



13...♖a6
13...♘b6 was the sharpest option, which consumed most of my thinking time before I went for 13.b4: 14.c5 ♘c4 15.♕b3 ♘d2! is a surprising stroke which took me some time to notice, and here we reach another critical position.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

16.♕a4, 16.♕c2, 16.♕d5 are all plausible. Before choosing 13.b4, this position was rather problematic, because it wasn't intuitively obvious to me that White would be doing well, so I thought I had better start calculating. Funnily enough, even with a computer running I'm not able to decide which of these is best, but it does seem that Black's position is basically OK.

A) During my think I convinced myself that 16.♕d5 was most promising: 16...axb4 17.♘cb5 e6! (17...e5 18.♘b3 ♘xb3 19.♕xb3, with decent pressure for the pawn; 17...c6! was my point, although the position may be balanced anyway; but 17...dxc5 18.♕xc5 was still dangerous for Black, as the ♘d2 is so precarious) is an option I underestimated: 18.♕xd6 ♘c4 19.♕xd8 ♖xd8 and the game is likely to become dead equal after some exchanges on the queenside;

B) 16.♕a4 might have been best.

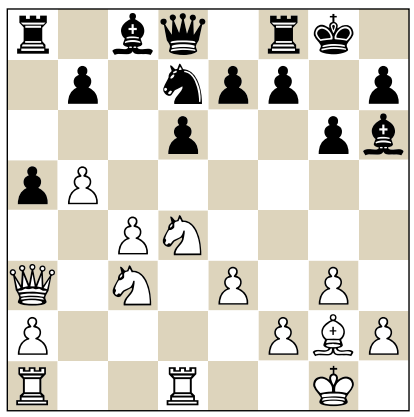
> 'Perhaps one's feelings during a chess game are just rather fickle'

16...♗d7 17.b5 (17.c6!?) 17...dxc5 18.♘b3 ♘xb3 19.♕xb3, with decent pressure for the pawn;

C) 16.♕c2 dxc5! (16...axb4 17.♘d5 looks good though still hugely complex) 17.♘b3 axb4 18.♘e4 ♘xb3 19.♖xd8 ♘xa1 20.♖xf8+ ♗xf8 This semi-forced variation crossed my mind during the game and my head was beginning to spin. It seems that after 21.♕b1 ♗f5!? 22.♕xa1 b3 only Black can hope for a win.

14.b5 Forced now, as the rook is defended on a6 so 14...axb4 was a threat. The pawn's advance to b5 is useful in many lines, but can also become a positional drawback.

14...♖a8 15.e3



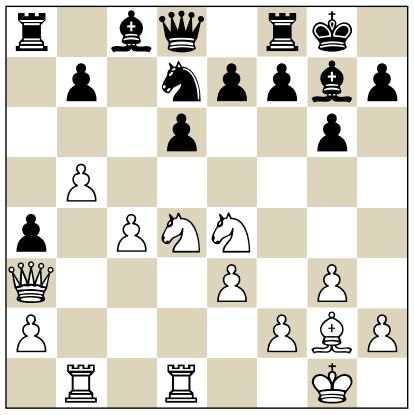
In the commentary room I was asked whether I considered ♘db5 on move 13, and I tried to explain that it looks nice but I felt it was important to play more purposefully (hence 13.b4 to threaten c4-c5). But when we got to this position, this calm consolidating move struck me as extremely natural, and the apparent inconsistency never crossed my mind. Perhaps I sensed a subtle distinction which even now is beyond verbal explanation, or perhaps one's feelings during a chess game are just rather fickle.

15...a4
A useful move, sometimes making a4 and b3 inaccessible to my knights, and sometimes making room for ...♕d8-a5.
Of course Black would love to occupy c5 immediately, but 15...♘c5 runs into 16.♘b3 or 16.♘e4, which dissolves the outpost, with c5 to follow soon.

16.♖ab1
16.♖ac1 was the natural alternative, but I felt the need for a brisk decision.

16...♗g7
Another useful move, which surprised me a little.
16...♘c5 17.♘b3! (17.♘e4 ♕b6 is less effective) is important once again.

17.♘e4



Truth be told, I had some ideas of collecting the pawn on a4 with ♖b4, but when Black plays ...♘c5 White will end up with horribly contorted pieces, so that idea got ditched. I was attracted to the idea of ♘c6-b4 which occurred in the game, and was glad that the rook on b1 proves relevant anyway.

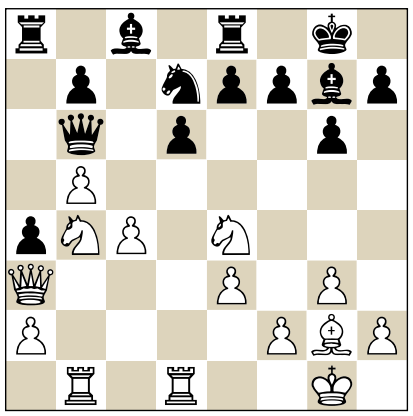
17...♕b6

17...♕c7 is another way to cover c5, but after 18.b6! ♘xb6 19.c5 White will soon recover the pawn with a dangerous initiative.

18.♘c6! ♖e8

18...bxc6 19.bxc6 is nice for White. For example 19...♕c7 (19...♕xc6?? 20.♘f6+) 20.cxd7 ♗xd7 21.c5 and Black will probably have to give up a pawn to fight for the draw.

19.♘b4



An unusual manoeuvre. The knight aims for d5 to control more dark squares and engineer a breakthrough.

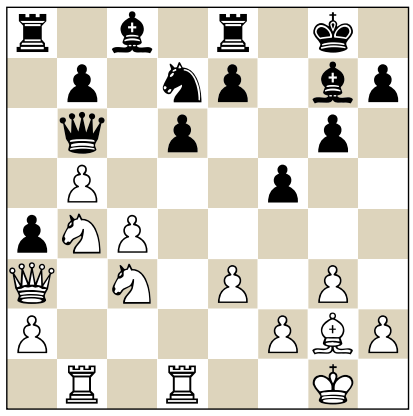
19...f5

I gather Viktor Kortchnoi condemned this as 'not a grandmaster's move' or something to that effect (while commenting on the games in the VIP-room – ed.). No doubt the move is ugly, but when I heard this, I dismissed it as the comment of someone who wasn't looking sufficiently concretely at the position, as Magnus and I both considered it almost forced.

But the old man's judgement was quite right, as I missed an important opportunity here. It seems Black would have done best to move the queen somewhere away from b6.

20.♘c3

20.c5 was tempting, but I didn't see a clear follow up after 20...♕d8. Instead, 20.♘d5 ♕d8 (20...♕a5 21.b6! is very strong, because 21...fxe4 22.♖b5 ♕a6 23.♘c7 traps Black's queen) 21.♘g5! was very powerful, as pointed out by Jacob Aagaard on his *Quality Chess* blog. When I read this, I couldn't figure out why it seemed so unnatural to me during the game. Jacob's 21...♘c5 22.b6 ♖f8 23.♘c7 ♖b8 24.♖b5! is a nice line, leaving Black no good answer to 25.♖xc5. But I think the point I overlooked is that 21...e6 22.b6! is almost decisive, e.g. 22...♕xg5 (22...exd5 23.♗xd5+ is suicidal) 23.♘c7 ♕e7 24.♘xa8 ♘c5 25.♘c7, with a clear extra exchange.

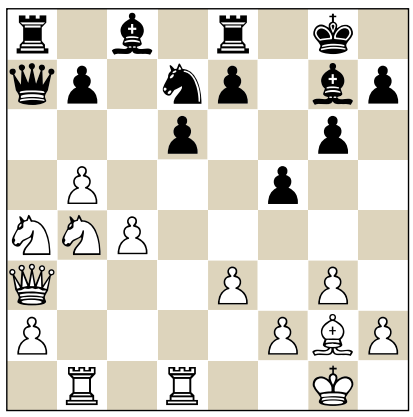


20...♕c5?

In practical terms, this was clearly the decisive error.

20...e6 was the main alternative which we both considered, and would have been better. At the board I was tempted by various sacrifices with ♘a6/♘c6, but hadn't found anything convincing. The best move seems to be simply 21.♘d3! (for example, 21.♘xa4 ♕a5 22.♘a6 looks good but seems to lead to equality after 22...♘c5 23.♕b4 ♕xb4 24.♖xb4 ♘xa6 25.bxa6 ♖xa6 26.♘b6 ♖xa2 27.♘xc8 ♖xc8 28.♗xb7) 21...♘c5 22.♖b4, and Black is still struggling.

21.♘xa4 ♕a7



22.♘a6!

A neat echo of 18.♘c6!. I'm not sure whether Magnus underestimated this or just overlooked some detail, but it's very strong. ♘a6-c7 is one threat, and 22...♖f8 23.c5! is crushing.

NEW IN CHESS

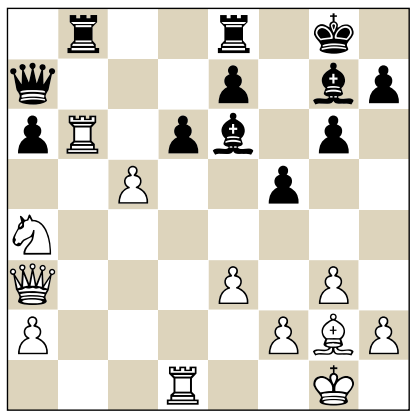
Luke McShane: 'I should add that Mihail Marin's triptych on the subject is beautifully written and inspirational.'

22...bxa6 23.b6 ♘xb6 24.♖xb6!

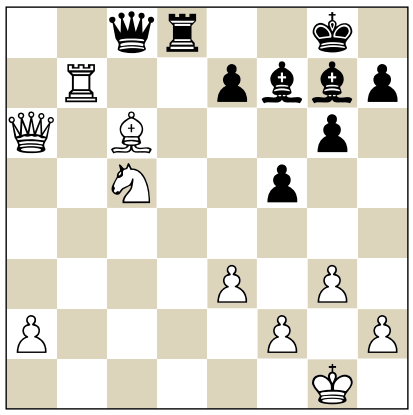
Much stronger than recapturing with the knight.

24...♖b8 25.c5 ♗e6

25...dxc5 26.♕xc5 is simplest. (I realized after playing 25.c5 that 26.♕b3+ doesn't actually win a rook due to 26...c4!, though 27.♕xc4+ is similar and also pretty good) 26...♖xb6 27.♘xb6 ♗e6 28.♗d5 ♗xd5 29.♕xd5+ e6 30.♕c6, and Black is still in desperate trouble.



26.♖db1! dxc5
26...♕c7 27.c6 and the pawn is too strong – ♖b7 is coming next.
27.♖b7 ♖xb7 28.♖xb7 ♕a8 29.♘xc5 ♕c8
29...♗f7 30.♖xe7 ♕b8 (30...♕c8 31.♖xf7! with a decisive attack, as pointed out by Magnus) 31.♖xe8+ ♕xe8 32.♕xa6 with two extra pawns.
30.♕xa6 ♗f7 31.♗c6 ♖d8

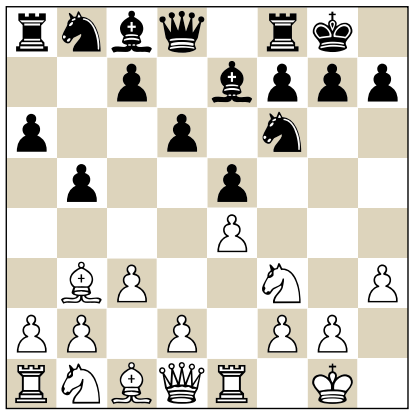


32.♘d7!
An excellent way to finish. I've been enjoying Yasser Seirawan's book *Chess Duels* lately. Annotating one of his wins against Mikhail Tal, he comments: 'It is perhaps excessive to award myself exclamation marks for my last two moves – after all, the position is winning. However, trust me that whenever you have one of these legendary guys against the wall, being exact is critical. You don't ever want to give them a smidgen of a chance for escape. They will find it.' I can't put it any better than that! The main threat is 33.♕b6 followed by ♖b8 or ♖c7 to trap the queen, and I had just enough time to make sure that there was no way out.
32...♖xd7
32...♗e8 33.♕b6 ♖xd7 34.♗xd7 ♗xd7 35.♖b8 wins, as does 32...♗e6 33.♕b6 ♖xd7 34.♖b8!.
33.♗xd7 ♕c1+ 34.♕f1 ♕xf1+ 35.♔xf1 ♗c4+ 36.♔g1 ♗xa2 37.♗a4
After the bishops are exchanged, it's trivial.
37...e5 38.f3
Not allowing the pawn to e4.
38...♗h6 39.♗b3+
Black resigned.

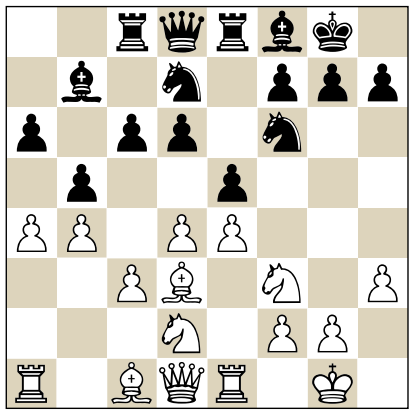
NOTES BY
Vishy Anand

RL 25.10 – C95
Vishy Anand
Magnus Carlsen
London 2010 (3)

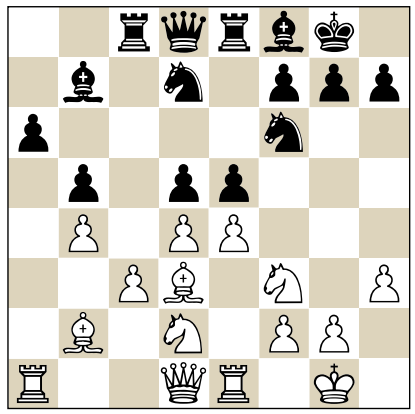
We met in the third round. Due to the scoring system Magnus was ahead of me. He had lost one game and won one, while I made two draws.
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.♖e1 b5 7.♗b3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 ♘b8



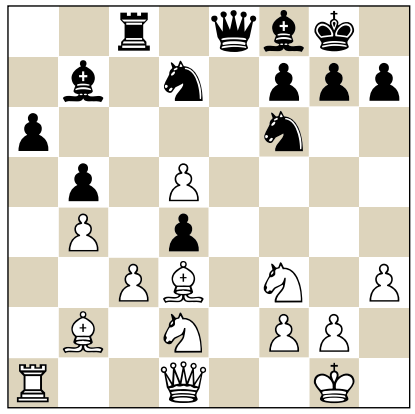
Magnus repeats the Breyer Variation, which has practically been the only thing we've been playing against each other for a while now.
10.d4 ♘bd7 11.♘bd2 ♗b7 12.♗c2 ♖e8 13.a4 ♗f8 14.♗d3 c6 15.b4 ♖c8 Here he deviates from the 15...♘b6 he played before. The plan is slightly different. The black rook on c8 can be important when you play for the ...c5 break.



16.axb5?
This is just a lapse of concentration. I was trying to understand the position well, and somewhere deep in my lines I was in some position where I wanted him to commit ...cxb5, which is why I suddenly played this move. Of course this is a mistake, as this is the whole point of 15...♖c8, that after 16...cxb5 the rook attacks c3, and after White protects the pawn Black goes 17...d5 and is already slightly better.
16...cxb5 17.♗b2
There is very little else White can do.
17...d5
And, as said, Black has attained his break. If the pawn were on c6 the black bishop on b7 would be hindered, but now Black's pieces are fully active.



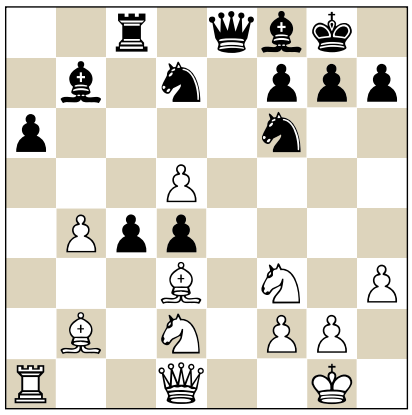
18.exd5
I panicked slightly. After 18.dxe5 dxe4 I think Black is slightly better or it is at least very pleasant for him. He can also take with the knight: 18...♘xe5, which is also excellent.
18...exd4 19.♖xe8 ♕xe8
I don't know if it was on move 18 specifically or if it was in two batches, but here I had been thinking for an hour.



20.c4
I had been working on the long sequence starting with this move, which would allow me to liquidate the

queenside and at least get a draw.
I had decided that if I played 20.♘xd4 ♘xd5 I would be worse, because my bishop on b2 is so much worse than his bishop on b7, for instance 21.♕b3 (on 21.♗f5 Black can choose between the solid 21...g6 and 21...♘xc3 22.♕g4 ♘f6 23.♕g3 ♘cd5 24.♗xc8 ♗xc8, with compensation for the exchange) 21...♘f4 22.♗f1 ♘b6, and this may not be really bad for White, but it's definitely unpleasant to play.

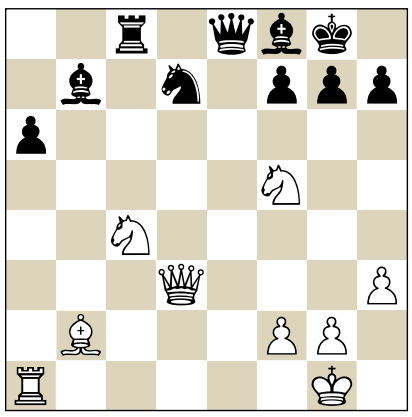
20...bxc4



21.♘xc4?

This is a mistake. I thought that after 21.♗xc4 ♗xb4 22.♗xd4 a5 Black would easily collect my d5 pawn, but this does not seem to be the case, as after 23.♕b3 ♕f8 24.♘f1 White has the plan to play ♘f1-e3, so taking on c4 with the bishop would have equalized the game.

21...♘xd5 22.♘xd4 ♘xb4 23.♘f5 ♘xd3 24.♕xd3



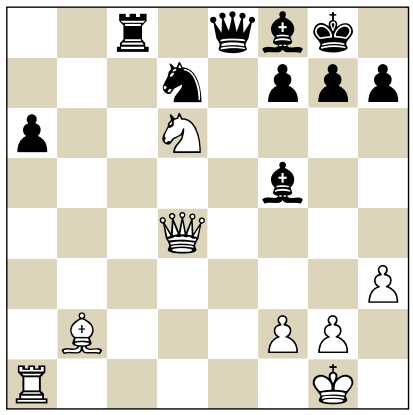
24...♗e4?

This is based on a tactical mistake. Before giving the best move, let me give an alternative, because there are some pretty variations: 24...♘c5 25.♘h6+ ♔h8 26.♕f5 ♕e4 (26...♖c7 27.♖d1 ♕c6 28.♗xg7+ ♔xg7 29.♕g5+ ♕g6 30.♕e5+ ♔xh6 31.♘e3!, and White wins back the rook on c7, and it is doubtful if Black has realistic chances to win.
And this is my favourite: 26...f6, when White has a nice trick: 27.♘d6! ♗xd6 28.♕xf6! ♘e6 29.♘f7+ ♔g8 30.♘h6+, and it's a draw), and now 27.♘xf7+ ♔g8 28.♕xe4 ♘xe4 29.♘fe5, and I guess White will hold this.
The correct move was 24...♕e6!. What I had missed after 25.♘cd6 (25.♘fd6 ♘c5!) is 25...♖c5!, and Black is clearly better (the move I looked at was 25...♖b8 26.♕d4! ♘f6 27.♘h6+ gxh6 28.♘xb7 ♖xb7 29.♕xf6 ♕xf6 30.♗xf6 ♖b6 31.♗d4, and it will be basically impossible for Black to realize his extra pawn) 26.♘xb7 ♖xf5, and Black has serious winning chances.

25.♕d4 ♗xf5?

A further mistake based on the tactical oversight already mentioned.
During the game I saw 25...♕e6 26.♘cd6 ♖c5! 27.♕xe4 ♕xe4 28.♘xe4 ♖xf5 29.♖xa6, and now that all pawns on the queenside have been eliminated it's a draw.

26.♘d6



26...♕d8

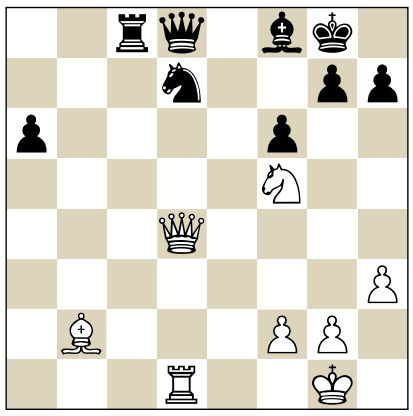
Suddenly he found himself forced to play this move. Originally he had intended 26...♕e6, but after 27.♘xc8 ♘c5 (after 27...♕g6 28.♕e3 is excellent for White) 28.♗a3! ♘b3 (28...♕xc8 29.♖c1) 29.♕d8 ♕xc8 he had missed 30.♖d1!, which turns the tables, instead of winning for Black it's winning for White.

27.♘xf5 Now White is already better, despite Black's extra pawn.

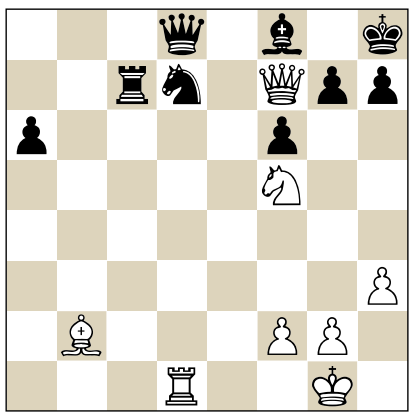
NEW IN CHESS

Vishy Anand left London with generally positive feelings, although he thought it was a bit funny that he scored-plus two, remained undefeated, beat the ultimate winner (below the two of them show their game to commentators of the day Daniel King and Chris Ward) and yet didn't even come close to winning a seven-round event.

27...f6 A move that is not unreasonable as a practical chance.
After 27...♕f6 28.♕xf6 ♘xf6 29.♗xf6 gxf6 Black will suffer a long time with his doubled f-pawns, for instance: 30.♖xa6 ♖c5 31.g4.
28.♖d1 The a-pawn is not relevant yet. White can play for an advantage without any risk.

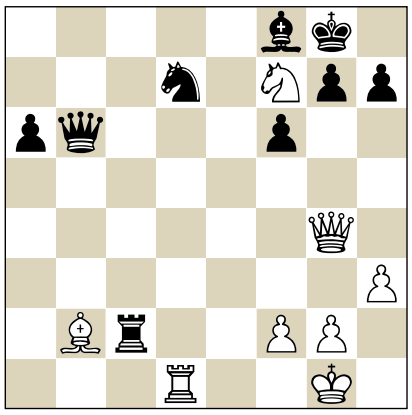


28...♖c2
Played after a long think. The lines after 28...♖c7 29.♕d5+ ♔h8 30.♕f7 show how immensely complicated it is to win this position for White. I saw a lot at the board, but there were many holes as well. White has to be very precise, because Black's defence is very tenacious:



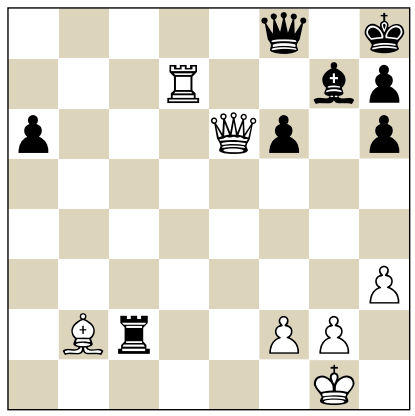
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

A) If 30...♕c8 31.♘h6 ♗c5 (or 31...♗b4 32.♕e6 ♘c5 33.♕b6! a5 34.♖d8+! ♕xd8 35.♘f7+, and wins) 32.♕e6!!, and wins;
B) Very difficult is 30...a5, though White does win after 31.♗a3 a4 32.♗d6! ♖b7 33.♖e1;
C) 30...h6 ultimately leads to a win for White, but there are many only moves on the way: 31.♖d4 (after 31.♘xh6? gxh6 32.♖xd7 ♖xd7 33.♗xf6+ ♗g7! Black wins) 31...♕b8 (31...♕c8 runs into 32.♘xh6! ♗c5 33.♖h4! ♗xf2+ 34.♔xf2 ♖c2+ 35.♔e3 – the only move, but winning – while 31...♘c5 is met by 32.♖xd8 ♖xf7 33.♘d6, and wins) 32.♘xh6 ♗c5 33.♘f5 ♘f8 34.♖h4+ ♘h7 35.♕g6 ♗xf2+ 36.♔xf2 ♕xb2+ 37.♔g1 ♖c1+ 38.♔h2 ♕b8+ 39.♘g3 ♕g8 40.♘h5! ♖f1 41.♘f4 ♖xf4 42.♖xf4, and wins.
29.♘h6+
This is fine, but another pretty sequence is 29.♕g4! ♔h8 30.♘h6 ♕b6 31.♘f7+ ♔g8. But White's next two moves are very difficult to find:

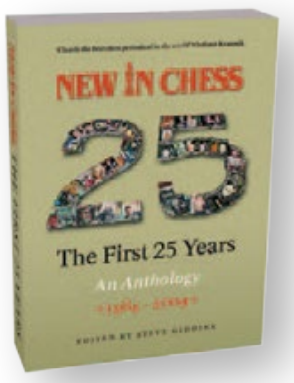


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

32.♗d4!! (very hard to see) 32...♕c6 33.♘d8!! ♕d6 34.♕h5! g6 35.♕f3 and White is winning: 35...♘c5 36.♗xf6 ♖xf2 37.♔xf2 ♕xf6 38.♕xf6 ♘e4+ 39.♔f3 ♘xf6 40.♖a1.
You may find 32.♗d4!! and 33.♘d8!!, but to calculate everything in advance and to understand that it is winning for this reason is unrealistic, so I don't regret missing 29.♕g4. This is pretty amazing stuff and very much a computer win. We both saw a good deal of what was going on, but the position is very difficult to analyse completely.
29...gxh6 30.♕g4+ ♗g7 31.♕e6+
After 31.♖xd7 ♕xd7 32.♕xd7 ♖xb2 33.♕e8+ ♗f8 34.♕e6+ ♔g7 I couldn't find a way to win the h-pawn: 35.♕xa6 ♖b1+ 36.♔h2 ♖e1!, and the rook gets back to safety on e7.
31...♔h8 32.♖xd7 ♕f8



33.♗a3
The win after 33.♖f7! would have been easy to find and execute, but I noticed that after 33...♕c8 (some precision is still required after 33...♕b8 34.♖e7! ♖c8 35.♖xg7 ♕xb2 36.♕f7 ♕a1+ 37.♔h2 ♕e5+ 38.f4!! ♕xf4+ 39.♖g3, and wins; 33...♕d8 loses to 34.♖e7!) 34.♕e7! ♖xb2 35.♖xg7 Black is threatening 35...♕c1+, and what you have to see is that after having taken on g7 the rook is ready to come back



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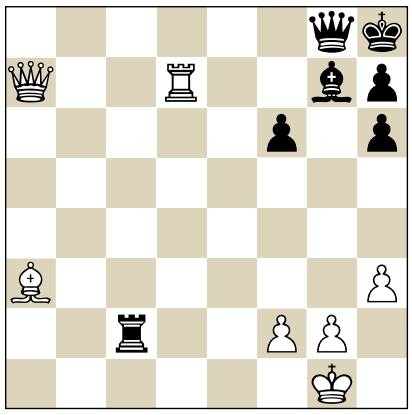
to g3 after 36.♔h2 ♕f4+ 37.♖g3, and Black can resign. You just have to see that move, and I didn't.

33...♕g8 Losing is 33...♕xa3 34.♖d8+ ♗f8 35.♕xf6+! ♔g8 36.♕e6+ ♔h8 37.♕f7.

34.♕xa6 Now we exchange a set of mistakes. **34...♕e8**

He should have gone 34...♖c8! 35.♗e7 ♕e8 and we transpose to the game.

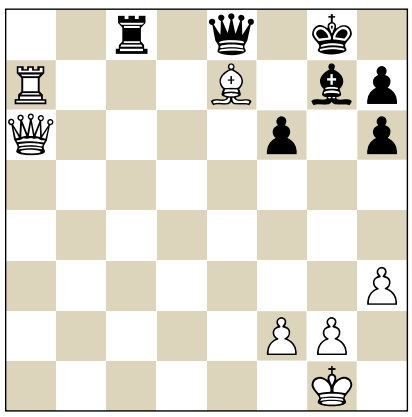
35.♕a7 ♕g8



36.♗e7

Black's 34...♕e8 was inaccurate, because now I could have cut his rook off with 36.♗c5!. The problem was not so much that I didn't see this move, but that I didn't see what it threatened: after this bishop move Black's rook is dominated: 36...♖e2 (or 36...♖c4 37.♕b6 ♖e4 38.♗e7 ♖e6 39.♕b4!) 37.♗e7!, and White is winning.

36...♖c8 37.♕a6 ♕e8 38.♖a7 ♔g8 The only move.



39.♕e6+

I didn't want to lose control of the position, but at the same time I didn't see what to do, so I repeated moves.

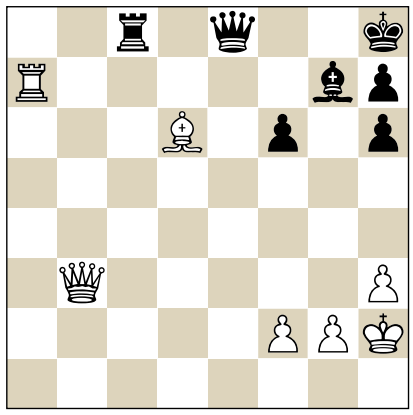
Of course I should avoid 39.♗xf6 ♗xf6 40.♕xf6 ♖c1+ 41.♔h2 ♕b8+, and my rook drops.

39...♔h8 40.♕a6 ♔g8 41.♕e6+ ♔h8 And now we could both take a break. **42.♔h2** Of course the idea of this move is to safeguard the king, but also to avoid the repetitions.

42...♖c6 43.♕b3

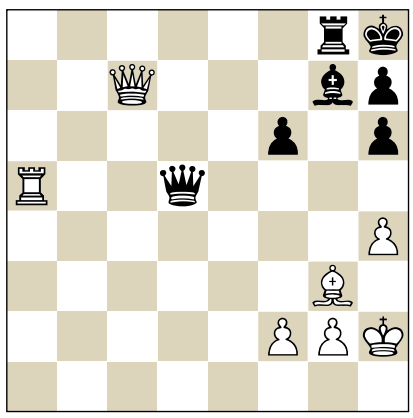
Quite strong was 43.♕a2. I don't know if it is forcing anything, but after 43...♗f8 44.♗xf8 ♕xf8 45.♖f7 I win a pawn.

43...♖c8 44.♗d6



We're no longer in the phase where I try to win by force. Now my idea is to bring my pieces back, put the queen on f3, leave the rook on the seventh rank, put the bishop on f4, play something like g3, h4 and then use the weaknesses on f6 and h6 against him. I assumed I had already spoiled it and that Black could hold, but I thought I could still torture him for a while.

44...♕g6 45.♕b7 ♖d8 46.♗g3 ♖g8 47.h4 ♕f5 48.♕c7 ♕d5 49.♖a5



This kind of indicates what White's plan is: when Black's queen goes to g6, I want to be able to play h5 at some point, and when the queen moves away to go to a7 and put some pressure on the g7 bishop. But it is a vague

In the VIP-room Julian Hodgson and Viktor Kortchnoi resumed their captivating verbal duels where they had left off last year.

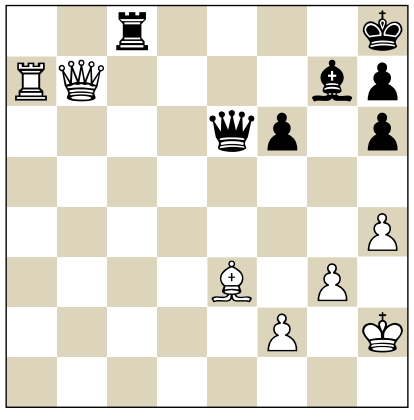
The final dinner and prize-giving once again took place at Simpson's in the Strand.

plan, I still don't know if it's winning or not.

49...♕e4 50.♕d7 ♕c4 51.♕f5 ♕c8 52.♕f3 ♕d7 53.♗f4 ♕f7 54.g3 ♖e8 55.♗e3 ♖g8 56.♖a6 ♖e8 57.♖a7 ♖e7 58.♕a8+ ♕f8 59.♖a6 ♖e8 60.♕c6 ♖c8 61.♕f3

Here I was slowly getting optimistic.

61...♕f7 62.♖a7 ♕e6 63.♕b7



This move I was quite happy with.

63...♕g8 64.♗f4 Because now he cannot kick my queen with his rook.

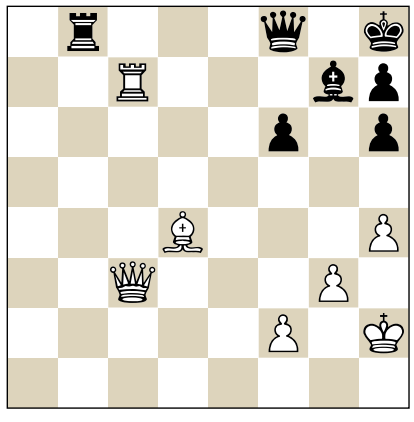
64...♖d8 65.♕a6 ♖e8 66.♖c7 ♖a8 67.♕c6

I have improved my queen and rook and now the third part of the plan follows: putting the bishop on d4 via e3.

67...♖e8 68.♗e3 ♖b8 69.♗d4 ♕f8

It seems that after 69...♖f8 70.♖d7 I am slowly able to win the pawn on f6 somehow. It is impossible to be sure, but intuitively I think there is some way forward for White, e.g. 70...♖f7 71.♖d6 ♕b8 72.♗xf6.

70.♕c3



And now suddenly I don't see a way for him to defend the f6 pawn, as there is no way for the rook to come to where it is needed.

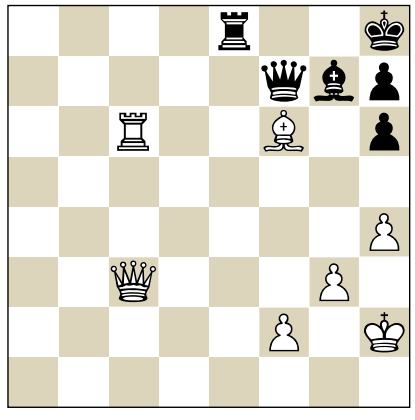
70...♖e8 71.♖c6!

Winning a pawn on the kingside, which is almost like a breakthrough.

71...♕f7

If instead he had gone 71...f5 then 72.♖c7 wins.

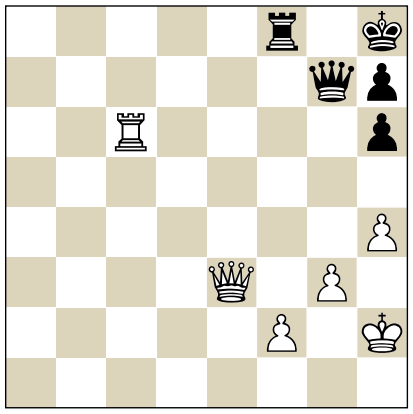
72.♗xf6 Now it's winning.



72...♖f8

One of the key moves is seen after 72...♔g8: 73.♕d4!, protecting the pawn on f2.

73.♗xg7+ ♕xg7 74.♕e3



74...♕b2 White also wins after 74...♖f6 75.♖c8+ (or 75.♖xf6 ♕xf6 76.♕f4!, as indicated by Magnus) 75...♖f8 76.♕e8!.

75.♔g2 ♕b7 76.♕xh6 ♕f7 77.♖c2

It seems that 77.f4 is playable as well, but it is obviously way too much trouble. After the text-move White is two pawns up and Black resigned.

Of course this was an important win. But to his credit, although Magnus was at –1 at this stage, he made 3½ points in the last four games and he still won the tournament. We all knew that the football scoring method was going to be used, we all had the same information, so you have to give him full credit for winning the event.

NOTES BY
Hikaru Nakamura

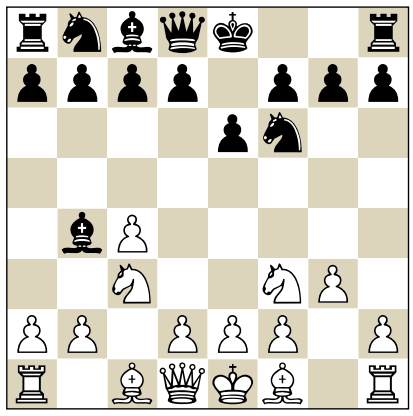
EO 59.7 – E20
Vladimir Kramnik
Hikaru Nakamura
London 2010 (2)

Similarly to when I played Vladimir in Wijk aan Zee way back in January, if I was able to hold with black, my tournament chances would vastly improve. Complicating matters in this game was that it also happened to be my 23rd (quite ridiculously old compared to all these young whippersnappers in chess now) birthday! Last year during the London Chess Classic I had to suffer for seven hours against Michael Adams before coming up with a miracle and drawing a lost rook and pawn ending. I was really hoping that this year would be different, so that I would be able to go out and hit a pub or two after the game!

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3

The first surprise of the game. I had expected Vladimir to go into either the Queen's Indian or the Nimzo-Indian.

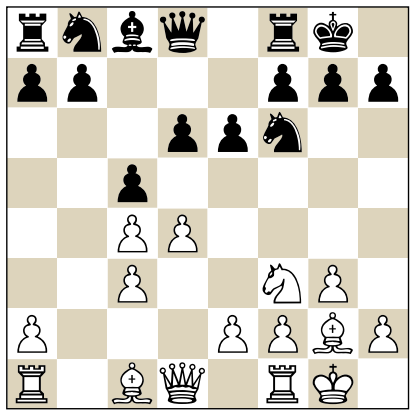
3...♗b4 4.g3



4...c5

Normally what I play is 4...b6, but as I was not prepared for this, I thought I would try something a bit different. In the 2010 U.S. Championship, I beat GM Robert Hess on the opposite side of this, but I felt there should be something playable.

5.♗g2 0-0 6.0-0 d6 7.d4 ♗xc3 8.bxc3



8...♕e7

After thinking for roughly 30 minutes I chose this move. I looked at many alternatives and could find nothing satisfactory.

After 8...♕a5 9.♗f4 ♖d8 10.♕c2 ♘c6 11.♖ab1 White has to be better due to the consistent pressure looming on the b- and d-files.

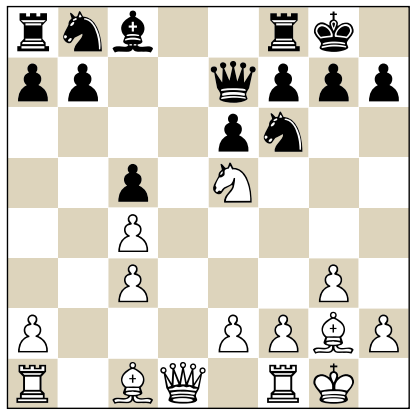
And after 8...♘c6 9.dxc5 dxc5 10.♗f4 ♕a5 11.♕c2 ♗d7 12.e4! White is once again much better and Black is going to suffer for a long time at the very least.

9.dxc5 After 9.♗f4 ♖d8 10.♕b3 ♘bd7 11.♖fd1 I had planned 11...♖e8, an odd move, but I could not find anything great for White after this: 12.♘h4 e5 13.♘f5 ♕e6 14.dxe5 dxe5 15.♗h3 exf4 16.♘h6+ gxh6 17.♗xe6 ♖xe6 18.gxf4. The computers like this, but no human in their right mind would play it.

9...dxc5 10.♘e5

In case of 10.♗f4 ♖d8 11.♕b3 ♘c6 12.♖ad1 ♖xd1 13.♖xd1 e5 14.♗g5 ♗e6 15.♗xf6 gxf6 16.♘d2 ♖d8 17.♗d5 f5 Black has no problems.

> 'Quite ridiculously old compared to all these young whippersnappers in chess now'



10...♕c7!

I saw this idea when I played 8...♕e7, and it is surprisingly effective.

London 2010 — cat. IXX

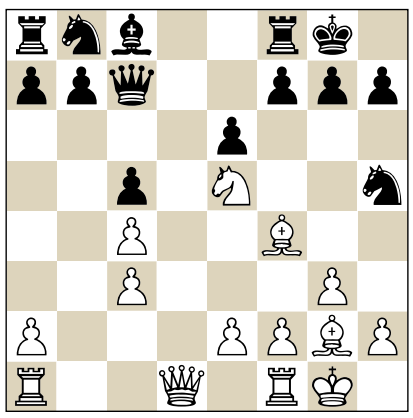
					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		TPR
1	Magnus Carlsen	IGM	NOR	2802	*	0	0	½	1	1	1	1	13	2816
2	Luke McShane	IGM	ENG	2645	1	*	½	½	½	½	½	1	11	2838
3	Vishy Anand	IGM	IND	2804	1	½	*	½	½	½	½	1	11	2815
4	Vladimir Kramnik	IGM	RUS	2791	½	½	½	*	0	½	1	1	10	2765
5	Hikaru Nakamura	IGM	USA	2741	0	½	½	1	*	½	½	1	10	2772
6	Michael Adams	IGM	ENG	2723	0	½	½	½	½	*	1	½	8	2725
7	David Howell	IGM	ENG	2611	0	½	½	0	½	0	*	½	4	2583
8	Nigel Short	IGM	ENG	2680	0	0	0	0	0	½	½	*	2	2422

11.♗f4

Played after a second long think by Vladimir. No doubt, he was frustrated at not finding something better against 8...♕e7.

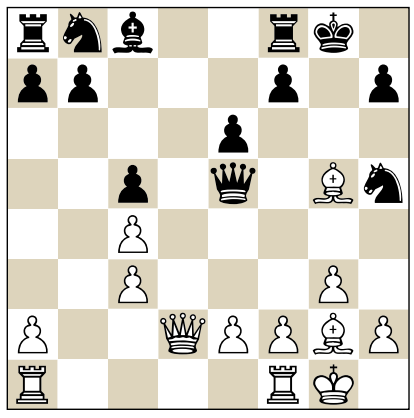
However, I do not think 11.♘d3 yields White any tangible advantage. After 11...e5 12.♗e3 ♘bd7 13.♕b3 ♖b8 I simply follow this up with ...b6 and ...♗b7, and I should have absolutely no problems thereafter.

11...♘h5



12.♕d2?! A daring move. I suspect that after using nearly 45 minutes on the sequence beginning with 9.dxc5, Vladimir was a bit frustrated at the lack of an advantage and took a gamble. I would equate with this a bold bluff in poker. Should I fail to call it with 12...g5, I would stand significantly worse. During the game I was highly confused, as I thought I was either a piece up or missing something very obvious and losing on the spot.

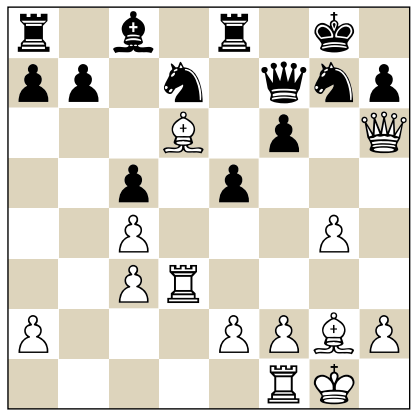
12...g5! 13.♗xg5 ♕xe5



14.♖ad1

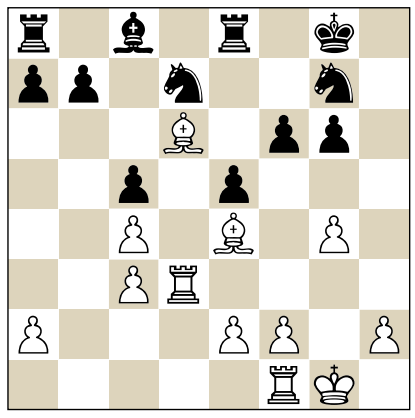
Here 14.g4 ♘g7 15.♗d8!? was an absolutely ridiculous alternative to the game, which is why computers are such a complete and utter joke. In many ways, I wonder if when artificial intelligence improves to the point where computers can chat, just how much more ridiculous their critiqueing of our games would become! After 15...♘c6 16.f4 (in case of 16.♗xc6 bxc6 17.♗e7 ♖e8 18.♗d6 ♕f6 19.♗xc5 e5 20.f3 ♗a6 Black is simply up a piece and completely winning) 16...♖xd8 17.♕xd8+ ♘xd8 18.fxe5 ♗d7 19.♖fd1 ♗c6 20.♗f3 Black still has a small advantage, but it should be much more difficult to convert than the game.

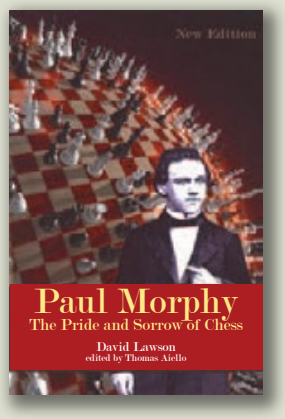
14...f6 15.♗h6 ♘g7 16.♗f4 ♕h5 17.♗d6 ♖e8 18.♕f4 ♘d7 19.g4 ♕f7 20.♖d3 e5 21.♕h6



21...♕g6? Played after a long think. Although this should be winning, it muddles the task significantly. Even now, I'm still confused as to why I didn't play the obvious 21...♘e6 22.♖h3 ♘b6 23.f4 ♘xf4 24.♖xf4 exf4 25.♕xf4 ♖xe2, which is easily winning, as White has no attack.

22.♕xg6 hxg6 23.♗e4





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23...♔f7?

A fairly minor inaccuracy, but considering the time pressure I was in, it is severely wrong.

After 23...♘b6 24.♗xg6 ♗xg4 25.♖g3, 25...♖e6! was the move I overlooked.

24.f4 exf4 25.♗d5+ ♘e6 26.♗xf4 ♘b6?

Although our silicon friend thinks this is still winning, I'm pretty sure it is not, as Vladimir and I now played perfectly until move 38.

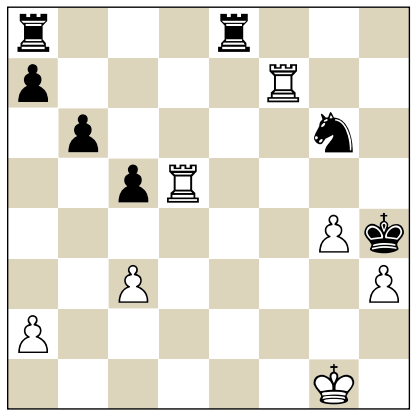
However, after 26...♔g7 27.♖e3 (if 27.♗xb7 ♘xf4 28.♖xf4 ♖b8 29.♗xc8 ♘e5 30.♖d6 ♖exc8 31.♖fxf6 ♖b1+ 32.♔g2 ♖b2 this should be an easy conversion, as the white pawn islands will all fall) 27...♘b6 28.g5 f5 29.♗e5+ ♔f7 30.♖h3 ♘xd5 31.♖h7+ ♘g7! 32.♖xg7+ ♔e6 Black should be winning, but as I was in time pressure, there was no way I would enter this set of complications.

27.♗e5 ♘xd5 28.cxd5 ♘f8 29.♖xf6+ ♔g8 30.♗d6 ♔g7 31.♖f4 g5 32.♖f2 b6 33.♖df3 ♘g6 34.♖f7+ ♔h6 35.h3 ♗a6 36.♖2f6 ♗xe2 37.♗e7 ♗c4 38.♖d6 ♗xd5?!

Objectively wrong, but the alternative looks extremely scary when one does not have a lot of time.

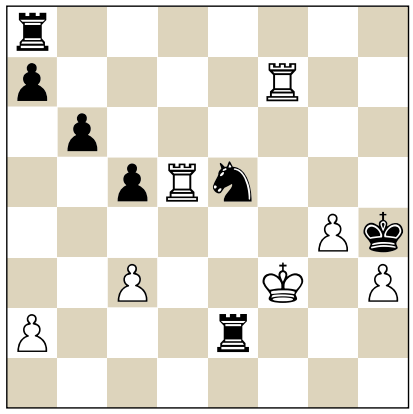
For instance 38...b5 39.♔f2 a5 40.♔g3 ♗d3 (a bad mistake is 40...♗xa2?? 41.♗xg5+ ♔xg5 42.h4+ ♔h6 – or 42...♘xh4 43.♖g7+ ♘g6 44.♖dxg6 mate – 43.g5+ ♔h5 44.♖h7 mate) 41.♖c6 c4 42.a3.

39.♗xg5+ ♔xg5 40.♖xd5+ ♔h4



41.♖f3?

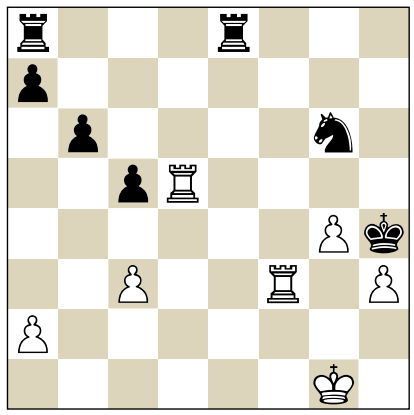
This is a mistake. He should have played 41.♔g2 ♖e5 (after 41...♖e2+ 42.♔f3 ♖e5 – here 42...♘e5+



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

43.♖xe5! ♖xe5 44.♔f4 is what Vladimir overlooked when he rejected 41.♔g2 – 43.♖h7+ ♔g5 44.h4+ ♔f6 – 44...♘xh4+ 45.♖xh4 ♖xd5 46.♖h5+ should be a draw – 45.♖d6+ ♖e6 46.g5+ ♔e5 47.♖xe6+ ♔xe6 48.h5 ♘e7 49.a4 a very dangerous ending arises where White has good possibilities) 42.♖xe5 ♘xe5 43.♖f5 ♘xg4 44.hxg4 ♔xg4 45.♖f7 ♖d8 46.♖xa7 ♖d2+ 47.♔f1 ♔f4 48.♔e1 ♖h2 (48...♖c2 49.♖a6 b5 50.a4 bxa4 51.♖xa4+ ♔e3 52.♔d1 ♖xc3 53.♖h4, with a drawn endgame) 49.♖e7 ♖xa2 50.♔d1 which should also lead to a drawn ending.

When Hikaru Nakamura played Vladimir Kramnik on his 23rd birthday, he was hoping for a good result, so that he would be able 'to go out and hit a pub or two after the game'. The American won and was left with 'a feeing of pure elation after beating a World Champion!'



41...♖e5! 42.♖xe5

Simplifying my task, although the alternative does not offer much either: 42.♖d6 ♖g8 43.♔f2 ♖e4 44.♖ff6 ♖f4+ 45.♖xf4 ♘xf4 46.♖h6+ ♔g5 47.♖h7 ♖d8!, and this variation is also winning.

42...♘xe5 43.♖f5 ♘d3 44.♔h2 ♖h8 45.a4 ♖h6 46.♔g2 a5 47.♔f3 ♘b2 48.♔f4 ♘xa4 49.c4 ♘c3 50.♔e3 a4 51.♔d3 ♘d1 52.♖f8 ♔xh3 53.g5 ♖d6+ 54.♔e4 ♔g4

And in view of 55.♔e5 ♖g6, Vladimir resigned here.

It's hard to express how I felt after this game other than having this feeling of pure elation after beating a World Champion! ■

At 16 he dropped out of school to be a chess player. None other than Bobby Fischer had praised his play and soon Ken Rogoff was an International Grandmaster. However, once he returned to the groves of Academe, he embarked on an even more impressive career in economics. Having graduated summa cum laude from Yale, he was Chief Economist of the International Monetary Fund from 2001 to 2003 and from 1999 he has been Professor of Economics and Public Policy at Harvard. His recent bestseller *This Time Is Different: Eight Centuries of Financial Folly*, written together with Carmen Reinhart, makes it clear why Rogoff is consulted by political leaders and policy makers all over the world. In the meantime his passion for chess has not dwindled, as **Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam** found out.

With sponsors that made their fortunes in the City, it could barely be a surprise that the VIP-room of the London Chess Classic was visited by numerous heavyweights from the world of finance. For the majority of the chess players they must have remained unnoticed, if only for the fact that almost all of them stuck to the modern adage that suits are for men who *hope* to become rich. Even the Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, walked in casually dressed in a sweater.

Jeans and a jacket without tie make Ken Rogoff fairly inconspicuous when he comes into the room during the fifth round. He only attracts attention when he starts to do interviews with Anand and Nakamura, filmed by a cameraman. His wife Natasha produces children's programmes and his clever promise to provide her with fairly unique footage is one of the reasons why they are now here. Rogoff's schedule is crazy and squeezing in a visit to a chess tournament is no sinecure. The density and tensity of his schedule is driven home to me when in the evening I write him an email suggesting an interview the next day and he almost promptly replies that it was a whirlwind visit and that he is already back in the States. As an alternative he proposes to talk via Skype and so the next Sunday, at 8 a.m. ('I often wake up at six, which is a good time to work with kids of 12 and 14') he sits ready in his study. He has just bought a new computer including a wide-angle webcam and the royal view that I have of him behind his desk makes it easy to forget that there is an ocean between us.

You clearly felt at ease at the London Chess Classic. What is it that you enjoy? Seeing old friends? The tension of the games?

'The last time I went to a tournament was Rotterdam 1988. I also saw one game of the Kasparov-Anand match in New York. It's fun. As for seeing old friends, there were only a couple of people I knew. Most of the players had started playing after I stopped. It was fun and interesting to meet them. It's a very nice tournament, very well organized. I knew I might be in London at that time. I thought I should go back to a tournament, I kept putting it off, but it was a great thing to do and my wife enjoyed it also, as she was able to do some filming. So it was great.'

How much had changed?

'(Immediately) Not a bit (laughs). Somewhere the computers were lurking in the background and obviously there was slightly better technology for seeing the games, but it felt very familiar.'

It's a common belief among chess players that they could also use their chess talent in other fields. And if this is not their own conviction then often other people will tell them so. Perhaps typical was Bobby Fischer's statement that he was not a chess genius but a genius who happened to play chess... '(Laughingly interrupts) I think he could say that!' **Yet, you are one of the rare exceptions of a chess grandmaster who made a**

Ken Rogoff: ‘My life would have been just fine if I’d stayed a chess player’

At the age of 16 Ken Rogoff was U-21 Champion of the United States. In 1969 he represented his country at the Junior World Championship in Stockholm, where this photo was taken.

serious career in another field. What are your views on the supposed further talents of chess players?

'There are simply a lot of extraordinary people who play chess, who clearly could have done anything, there is no doubt about that. One of the things at the very top level that makes them great players is the ability to be totally consumed and focused on chess. That's also one of the reasons why it is hard to do two things, because you either give your life and your passion to it or you're just not the same. That was also true of course of Fischer, who was monomaniacal and that was a big part of his gift. One of the things I say about chess, I don't know if it's true, but I felt at least when I played, that there are all different kinds of people that can be good at chess. You needed to learn to adopt your style to what you did well. So, trying to draw a simple generalization like chess players are good at science or chess players are good at mathematics or chess players have good memories, doesn't work very well. In fact one of the things that is so interesting about chess is that it has this flexibility to be able to approach it in different ways. Clearly at the very highest level, if you have one glaring weakness, it's going to get you, but you can look at even some of the different top players, and they approach it very differently. I also would say in chess in schools, sometimes the kid who is the math whizz and considered the class's brain is by no means the best chess player. Sometimes kids who don't even think of themselves as super smart turn out to be the best chess players. I think that is one of the mysteries and exciting things about chess.

'In chess people can figure out where their strengths are and try to play at them. I think they do that at every level. You can have someone who has a phenomenal memory and you make use of that, and you can have someone who has very good calculating and you can use that. You can be someone who is very good at drawing analogies. Maybe you don't have a great memory and maybe you don't calculate well, but you are very good at drawing analogies between different positions. It's a matter of adopting what your talents are. I thought it was very interesting what different people chess players are.'

Do you think you can read a person's character from his game?

'I used to think that, I really did. I think you can tell a lot. I certainly don't play enough to do that, but I think that if you play chess with a person it's like a conversation. You learn something about a person playing chess. You can certainly learn about their personality, and I don't mean watching them at the chess board, I mean the moves.'

Did you do a lot of thinking about this when you were an active player? About what chess is and how you could improve your play in other manners?

'Yeah, I think I am going to answer a slightly different question. A very important part of chess is figuring out your mistakes and how to improve and it's very painful. Because let's face it, it's much more fun to play over your wins than the losses. And yeah, you just have to play over your losses again and again and again. I remember meeting Bobby Fischer when I was playing in the U.S. Junior Championship in New York in 1969. He had been having problems with rook and pawn endings. He got outplayed in some rook and pawn endings and he basically finally said, OK, this stops here, this isn't going to happen again. And he was spending all his time on rook and pawn endings. And indeed, I think it was against Geller that he won a rook and pawn ending after that, that you couldn't have imagined before. I think that takes really steel will and most people don't have it. Most people lose the same game again and again and again. They don't realize that they are losing the same game again. The real top players have that ability to try to suffer repeatedly through the same defeat and learn from it.'

'It was very interesting what different people chess players are.'

Is that something you did yourself?

'I understood it, but I definitely didn't do it as well as I would have liked. I absolutely understood it, but there were certainly mistakes I repeated at desperate moments in my career, that I said, oh boy, what an idiot, can't you learn? But well, we're all human.'

Returning to the further talents of chess players, in the early 1990s Bankers Trust tried to recruit employees among chess grandmasters.

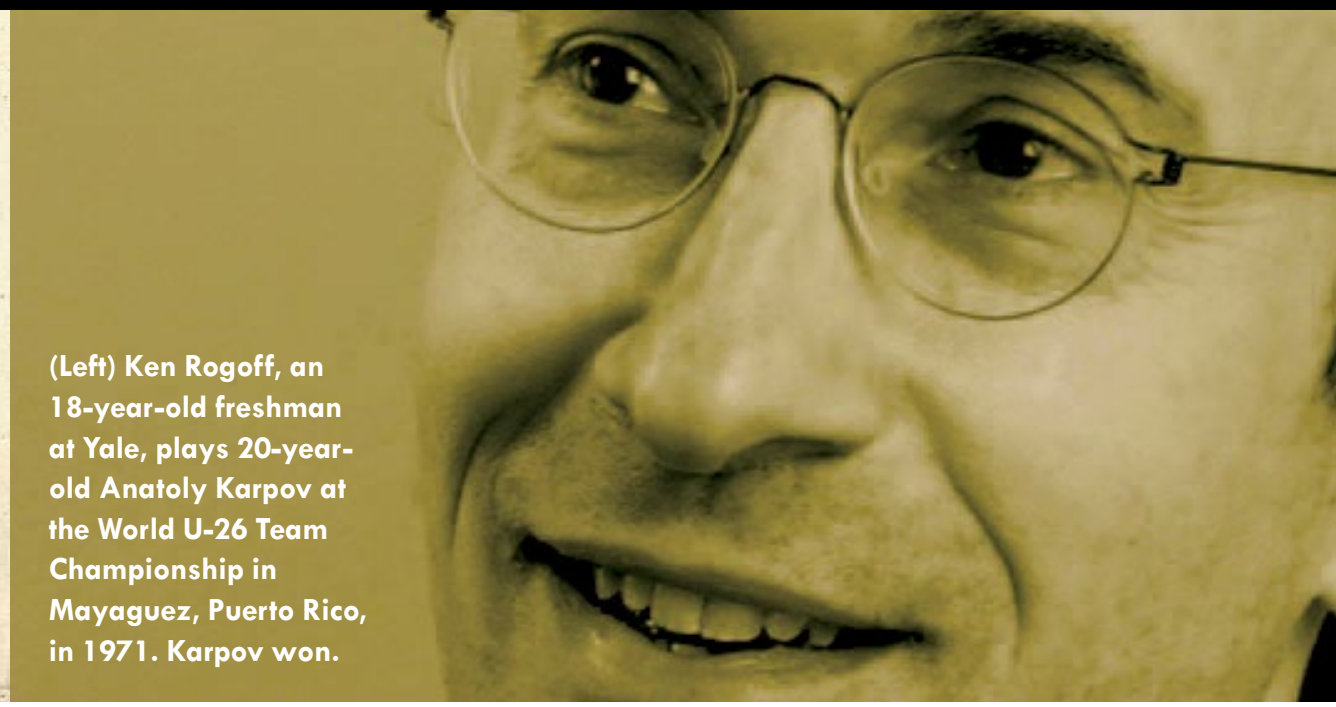
'Yes, Norman Weinstein was an extremely good trader at Bankers Trust. He was one of the best of that era. The campaign was because of him, because he was so successful. He was an International Master and I've known him from childhood and we are friends still. There was a time at Wall Street, and it is still true, where they feel if you're smart and willing to learn, they can work with you. They didn't just look at chess players, I would say they even went to look at chess players and a few have done well.'

In 1991 we had Bankers Trust adverts on the back cover of New In Chess specifically aimed a top-level chess players.

'Wow.'

Would you say this was a successful campaign?

'I am not the person to ask, because I



(Left) Ken Rogoff, an 18-year-old freshman at Yale, plays 20-year-old Anatoly Karpov at the World U-26 Team Championship in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, in 1971. Karpov won.

don't know them all, but I think there have been a few who managed to do that. I am not a trader, that's a very specific thing, I am more of a philosopher, an academic. Being a trader certainly requires iron nerves as chess does and also this ability to concentrate for very long periods. What I do is very different. In economics, there are a couple of areas where I have found having played chess very useful. There's an area of economics called game theory, and some of my work makes use of it. I've done research on why countries can benefit from having independent central banks that try to keep inflation low instead of having monetary strategy managed by the treasury. I wrote a paper on that more than 25 years ago, back when there were only a couple of countries in the world that had independent central banks. That actually uses a bit of game theory. And then I also do a lot of work on financial crises and countries defaulting and that too involves game theory. Because when countries default on their debt, it's almost never because they can't repay it, it's because they don't feel like it and it's a strategic interaction. Game theory is quite complex mathematically. I am not a great mathematician, I am certainly not someone like John Nunn, but the parts of game theory I needed, came very intuitively to me. And I think having played chess was very helpful in my work. I can also say, much later in my career, when I became Chief Economist at the International Monetary Fund, I again found chess very useful. I would say particularly in negotiations, where at least chess taught me to think about what the other person's thinking in a very disciplined way. And also to stay very calm. Now other people may develop those skills in their own way, but I learned them through chess.'

Is that because chess players have to be by nature good psychologists?

'Maybe a computer can afford not to think about what the opponent is

'Most people lose the same game again and again and again.'

thinking, but most of us are trying to understand what your opponent's next move is going to be. Part of it are the objectives of the position, but part of it is their temperament and many other things. You could technically, as a computer does, just think about your own move, and there are times when that's the right thing to do, but chess teaches you to think what another person's thinking. It's funny, because chess is considered to be so isolating and anti-social by many people, but in some ways it's not. Another very important skill you learn in chess is that we all make mistakes. And if you panic after you made a mistake you're doomed. Chess teaches you to stay calm in difficult situations. I've certainly faced many challenging situations in my career as an economist, particularly over the last decade, where I think that's been very useful. Let's say, you're giving a lecture and you make a mistake and you could just fall when somebody points that out and you do not know what to say next. But if you stay calm you can think of how to recover from it. In chess that is very important, both within a game and I'd say also within a tournament. When you lose a game, do you just become depressed? I've never looked at it statistically, but I am sure it must be true that for most players their performance the day after they lose a game has a worse average than their overall performance. Not the very top players, of course, but for most people the best time to play someone is the day after they lost.'

In chess there is this idea that the truth exists. Do you feel that in your field of work the truth can be found?

'(Laughs) No, it's a social science and at the end of the day a lot of important results depend on how people behave acting in concert. Economics is not so much about individual psychology as group behaviour. We have cer-

tain rules of thumb, like people like to pay less rather than to pay more and such that are very useful, but it's just too complicated to talk about reducing it to absolutes. There are certainly principles we have that we know, and economics is always advancing, but I don't think anyone speaks yet in terms of absolute truth. In chess, clearly, you can ultimately have a computer that will never lose. I think in economics I am not sure we can, say, design a trader who will never lose money.'

In the current worldwide financial crisis many people are wondering what is really going on. In your columns you are very outspoken. Is that a scary thing, because the impact can be so tremendous?

'I try to be very responsible in what I say. We all make mistakes, but I try not to make off-hand remarks or say things to the extreme just to make a point if I don't believe it, particularly in my writings. I have an internationally syndicated column that is published in over 50 countries and 13 or 14 languages. You have to say something or you're not interesting, but I certainly am careful. I don't think one wants to excessively weight one's influence, that's for sure. I've certainly talked to many many presidents and prime ministers, but I don't humour myself to think that the whole future of anything turns on anything I say. Most people who are world leaders and policy makers look at many ideas and sources of information and then try to go with the flow when they see a lot of things pointing in the same direction. I don't try to say things just to gain attention.'

But when you are writing about the Euro zone you are convinced that they'd be better off if they took the right decisions now.

'Yes. A lot of my work and particularly the past ten years has been on the history of financial crises. I wrote this book with Carmen Reinhart, *This Time Is Different*, which took us eight years to write, about financial crises. One of the lessons is that the policy makers often are frozen and unable to take steps quickly enough. Markets move faster than policy makers and probably the single-most consistent mistake you see over time is the policy makers' fail to get ahead of the curve. They don't want to see it coming, they won't admit it's coming. That's clearly been a huge problem in Europe.'

And this is simply something you're warning them for.

'Oh yeah. I can certainly say there is an open conversation beyond just my column, but of course it's not easy to take these tough decision and especially within Europe where there are widely diverging interests.'

How influential Ken Rogoff is he found out in 2008 when in a speech in Singapore he said: 'We're not just going to see mid-sized banks go under in the next few months, we're going to see a whopper, we're going to see a big one – one of the big investment banks or big banks.' The next day his remark was front page news all over the world. Less than a month later Lehman Brothers collapsed.

'In this speech I pointed at my research and also at some of my students' research, which suggested that first of all the world was going into recession and second that the financial system had just gotten too big and needed to shrink. And I thought through how would it shrink and I said it seemed to me unlikely that it would shrink by having all the banks in the world shrink by 15 or 20 percent at the same time. Which I called an immaculate contraction. I said that was awfully unlikely. The way capitalist systems work is that if there is too much supply, a couple of companies go under. A big airline, we see it all the time. I thought the same would happen with the banking sector. I have to say, sometimes things surprise you. I was quite surprised that that made such headlines as it did.

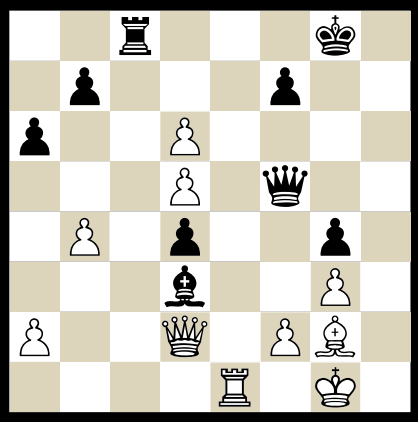
'I didn't say anything about Lehman. I was thinking about Lehman, but I certainly didn't say that. Sometimes you say these things when everyone else is thinking them. But the bottom line is that I like to study the international financial crises, I don't like to cause them. I certainly hadn't anticipated being in bold headlines on the front page of almost every newspaper in the world for what I thought was making a straightforward obvious point.'

And you really went into hiding?

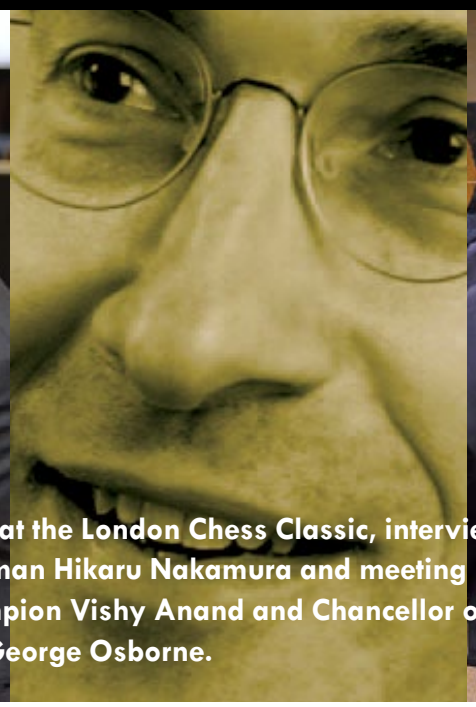
'I did. I got calls from every newspaper or television station. You know, if I couldn't have an interview they'd fly me to wherever I wanted to go. First of all I didn't see the positive effect of saying anything further. And I didn't want to be asked, who were you talking about? I didn't want to say and I didn't want to not say. I certainly

Ken Rogoff
Jan Smejkal
Biel Interzonal 1976

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 c5 3.g3 g6 4.♗g2 ♗g7 5.e3 0-0 6.♘ge2 ♘c6 7.0-0 d6 8.d4 cxd4 9.exd4 ♗f5 10.h3 h5 11.♗g5 ♕d7 12.♔h2 e5 13.d5 ♘d4 14.♘xd4 exd4 15.♘b5 ♖fc8 16.♖c1 ♘h7 17.♗f4 g5 18.♗d2 a6 19.♘a3 g4 20.hxg4 hxg4 21.b4 ♗d3 22.♖e1 ♕f5 23.♔g1 ♗f6 24.c5 ♘g5 25.♗xg5 ♗xg5 26.♘c4 ♖d8 27.♘xd6 ♖xd6 28.cxd6 ♗xc1 29.♕xc1 ♖c8 30.♕d2



30...♔h7 31.d7 ♖d8 32.♖e7 ♔g6 33.d6 ♔f6 34.♕h6+ ♕g6 35.♕h4+ ♔g7 36.♖e8 1-0



Ken Rogoff at the London Chess Classic, interviewing his countryman Hikaru Nakamura and meeting World Champion Vishy Anand and Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne.

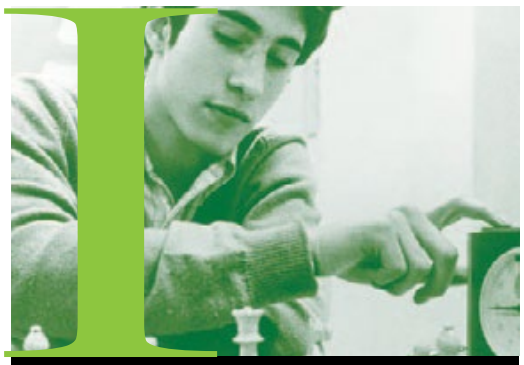
spoke to policy makers that contacted me, but I felt it wasn't appropriate to talk to the press because I didn't want to be painted into a corner where I would have to say what bank I was talking about.'

If you look at your resume, starting with dropping out of school to play chess and then becoming a respected scientist with a huge career, it is hard to see any logic. What logic do you see?

'Chess players are very creative people. I think to be a successful chess player you have to constantly think of new ideas. The same thing is true at least to be an academic, an economist, I don't know, probably it's true in any branch, to be successful you have to be creative. If you just follow life in a very linear fashion that doesn't always lend itself to creativity. People tend to think of artists and musicians as quirky and creative, but anyone who knows chess players knows that there is a lot in common. It's probably less so of academics, but there are certainly a lot of interesting stories people have.'

When you left school to play chess, did you have the feeling this was something you were going to do for a long time to come or was it just an adventure?

'I don't think I thought two moves ahead to be honest. It felt like the right thing to do. Frankly, I think this is not literally true, but it felt like more people went to jail than to college at my school. There were some very good teachers and there were some very good students, but it was a tough place and I didn't feel like I was missing a lot. I was very excited about playing chess and back then in the United States there was just very little, it was very hard to be a chess



'It's always puzzled me that chess hasn't done better commercially.'

player. Just based in the United States you couldn't grow, so I felt playing in Europe was important. It wasn't carefully thought out.'

Which were the three most memorable games you played in your career?

'Boy, that's a tough question, but I'll just whip off of the top of my head. The first one I was very young. I won a game against Stephen Spencer. This was a game Fischer annotated later and I went over the game for what must have been a few hours with him and I won my first U.S. junior championship (Fischer visited the championship and wrote in his column in *Boys' Life*: "The player that impressed me most was 16-year-old Ken Rogoff from Rochester, N.Y. What I liked best about Ken – who won the championship – was his self-assured style and his knowing exactly what he wanted over the chess board. I'm told that he's only been playing chess for two or three years and it should encourage each of you young fellows who read this column to know that by applying yourself, as Ken did, you can become a fine player in a relatively short time, too." – DJtG). Another game that was certainly important was against Kavalek in the U.S. Championship in 1975. Again it was a good game, but it was a very important game competitively. I ended up finishing second and qualifying for the Interzonal and probably was leading the tournament at that time. It was a very difficult game, I remember that. Probably another one would be my game with Smejkal from the Interzonal in Biel in 1976, where he was outplaying me badly, but he slipped at one point and let me have a counterattack which won. It was an interesting game, but again an important game. I enjoyed a lot of my games, and there are certainly games I won crushingly, but those are games I remember.'

What was the reason for you to return to school: because there were not enough chances for you in chess or because there was the lure of something else?

'This is a combination of the two. I certainly realized I wouldn't be World

Champion. I had met Karpov, and he was a couple of years older than me, and not like I would say I couldn't win a game, but this was somebody who was just amazingly talented, worked what seemed like night and day on chess. I remember another game I played, I think I was 16 years old, against Ljubojevic, who was 19 when I played him. I was Black in a Sicilian. You have to remember he was absolutely one of the couple most talented players in the world then and I think he rose as high as third. We played the Sicilian, where I actually needed to win to make an international master norm, and he won beautifully. I remember analysing the game afterwards with him and there were some very long variations. As a 16-year-old player playing mostly older players I was certainly used to being outplayed, say in endgames, but almost never outcalculated, that just didn't happen. There was one point where I thought I had calculated a very long nice variation and I asked Ljubo, What were you going to do here? And he said, No, no, you show me. And I reeled off what was for me an incredibly long and creative variation. And he said, Oh yes, and then he told me, No, that doesn't work and showed me one that was about twice as long that would actually win. I was blown away.

'I had already done very well against top players in the world at that time. I won't say I was lacking confidence, but I felt it was awfully unlikely I would be World Champion. At the same time I had a somewhat idealistic view of what I might accomplish in my life and so I decided to go to school. I think I would have been very happy as a chess player. Frankly, I don't think I ever was unhappy. I really loved it and enjoyed it. My life would have been just fine if I'd stayed a chess player.'

What was the idealistic idea you had about your life?

'One thing I thought to myself was I wanted to do something more important in my life. And I have to say that for years I was doing theoretical economics, very mathematical, which I thought was important, but I am not sure that many people could understand. Another reason was I didn't like the travel so much and now of course I travel all the time as an international economist. And a third reason was I thought I had a much better social life when I was back at home in Rochester than when I was travelling. There were virtually no women in chess and now of course I am in a profession which has very few women also. So later in life I realized that everything was just about me and not about chess. But when you're 17 or so when I was thinking this, you don't realize that.'

Did you ever look at the chess world as a closed economic system? First there were the Soviets who were spoiling it for the players from the Free World, because they were supported by the State. Later when the Soviet Union collapsed they were still there and too many people were playing for too little money.

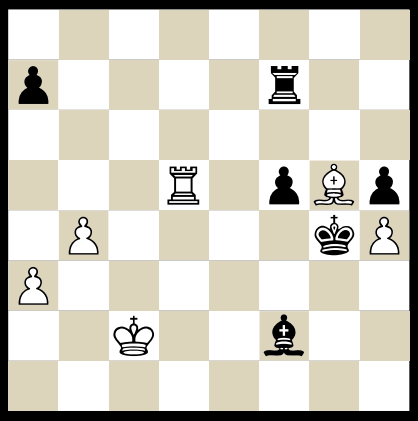
'You know, it's funny, when I was 17 or 18, I would read articles that were really very thoughtful, and I remember one by I think his name was Camille Coudari, he was a French-Canadian player, a very strong player back then. I remember him writing chess being an opiate for the masses, all sorts of philosophical articles and I was so focused on chess I didn't think a lot. I should have thought about those things. I'd like to say I had the depth and maturity to be aware of those things, but I probably didn't. I didn't worry about that at all. Just didn't think about it.'

Did you think about this later, looking from the outside in, thinking: what a strange economy is this?

'It's always puzzled me that chess hasn't done better commercially, because it has such cachet, there's so many people interested. Even as the world has evolved, chess is very Internet-friendly and at the cutting-edge of artificial intelligence and computing. It's always puzzled me. You can blame it on the other disfunction of the world chess federation, but I'm not sure that's it. It's not something I understand very well. One aspect, which is in common with being an actor or being in the movies, is that people love to play chess. They're willing to play chess for very little, they love it. You may think of actors as making a lot of money, but if you take them col-

Lubomir Kavalek
Ken Rogoff
U.S. Championship 1975

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 ♘c6 6.♘f3 ♗g4 7.cxd5 ♘xd5 8.♕b3 ♗xf3 9.gxf3 e6 10.♕xb7 ♘xd4 11.♗b5+ ♘xb5 12.♕c6+ ♔e7 13.♕xb5 ♕d7 14.♘xd5+ ♕xd5 15.♕xd5 exd5 16.♗e3 ♔e6 17.0-0-0 ♖c8+ 18.♔b1 ♗c5 19.♖he1 ♔d6 20.♖d3 ♖hd8 21.a3 h6 22.h4 h5 23.♖g1 g6 24.♗g5 ♖e8 25.♖gd1 ♗xf2 26.♖xd5+ ♔c6 27.♖5d2 ♖e1 28.♖xe1 ♗xe1 29.♖e2 ♗a5 30.f4 ♗b6 31.f5 gxf5 32.♖e5 f6 33.♖e6+ ♔d5 34.♖xf6 ♔e4 35.♖f7 ♖c7 36.♖f8 ♗c5 37.♖f6 ♗d4 38.♖f8 ♗g7 39.♖e8+ ♔f3 40.♖e1 ♗d4 41.b4 ♔g4 42.♖d1 ♗f2 43.♖d5 ♖f7 44.♔c2



44...f4 45.♔d1 f3 46.a4 ♗g3 47.♖d4+ ♔h3 48.♗e3 f2 49.♗xf2 ♗xf2 50.♖e4 ♗xh4 51.a5 ♗f2 52.b5 h4 53.♔e2 ♔g2 54.b6 axb6 55.axb6 h3 56.♖g4+ ♗g3 0-1

CHESS TOURNAMENT leader Kenneth Rogoff waits, paces and appears poised to pounce on his opponent as their match on Monday neared its conclusion. And that's pretty much what happened: Rogoff won the match. Watching in the background is Paul Drummond, who brought the tournament to Oberlin.

The other day I dropped over to the U.S. Junior Championship at the McAlpin Hotel in New York City and saw some very talented young players in action, struggling for the title. It brought back memories of years ago when I used to be in those events.

The player that impressed me most was 16-year-old Ken Rogoff from Rochester, N. Y. What I liked best about Ken — who won the championship — was his self-assured style and his knowing exactly what he wanted over the chessboard. I'm told he's only been playing chess two or three years and it should encourage each of you young fellows who read this column to know that by applying yourself, as Ken did, you can become a fine player in a relatively short time, too.

Incidentally, it might also be interesting to note that Ken drew a game with Bent Larsen in the summer of '68 when Larsen was playing in the U.S. Open championship. Larsen is considered one of the very best players in the world today.

In this game that I'm going to briefly outline, Ken clinched the first prize

CHECKMATE

By BOBBY FISCHER

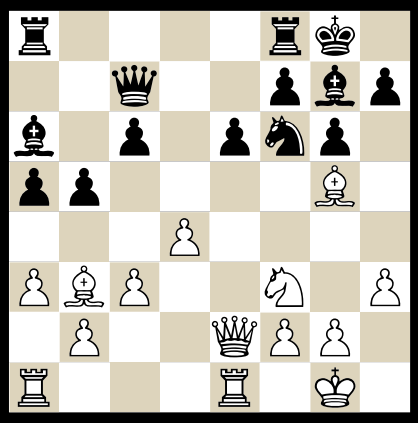
lectively they make nothing. There's a couple of people, like Leonardo Di-Caprio, making a lot for his movie, but most people get nothing. In their whole lives they get nothing and in fact the directors, the producers, they all get nothing too. There's this huge pool of people for whom there's just nothing they'd rather do. Chess has a bit of that because you have these immensely talented people who love to play chess and this creates this big pool. Nevertheless, even with that, I never have fully understood why chess has not been more successful in being bigger commercially.'

That's what I was thinking about inspired by the title of your book, *This Time Is Different*. To my mind the chess world in the past twenty or thirty years has been in some permanent crisis and I was wondering if things are different now or if there have always been the same problems that are simply intrinsic for chess players and for them as a community?

'I think Fischer made an enormous contribution to chess and I was interested that a lot of the players in London whom I interviewed remarked on that. That they felt their lives were just much better because of the professionalism that Fischer brought. It really changed things. But then, since Fischer, it's hard to point at a big change like that for chess. It's really drifted since then, it doesn't feel like it's improved. I was very impressed at the London Chess Classic that the conditions were pretty good. Generally speaking, of course to this very elite group, they felt that the general level of professional conditions was good. But it doesn't feel like it's nearly what it could be.'

Ken Rogoff
Steve Spencer
New York 1969

1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♗g7 3.♘c3 c6 4.♘f3 d5 5.h3 dxe4 6.♘xe4 ♘d7 7.♗c4 ♘gf6 8.♘xf6+ ♘xf6 9.0-0 0-0 10.c3 ♕c7 11.♕e2 b6 12.♗g5 b5 13.♗b3 a5 14.a3 ♗a6 15.♖fe1 e6



16.♕e5 ♕xe5 17.♘xe5 ♖fc8 18.♘xf7 ♔xf7 19.♖xe6 ♘e8 20.♖f6+ 1-0

You don't have any clear suggestions?

'Unfortunately I am not deeply immersed in the chess world to understand that or to give any wisdom. It is clear to me that people complain about chess not being a great spectator sport, but it's a fantastic Internet spectator sport. And somehow that equation hasn't been closed. That ought to offer opportunities that haven't yet been exploited.'

How much time do you still spend thinking about chess these days?

'I think about chess all the time. That's a short answer! It's not thinking about it with any depth but I think part of my brain is hardwired to play chess and so I'll think about it. In boring meetings I think about it, walking along you're thinking about small positions, games, nothing really of a deeply constructed nature. But I think it's something, if anything, I do to relax. And by the way, I am a big fan of New In Chess, it's just a wonderful magazine. I started subscribing to it a few years ago and, once again, I don't read it with any depth... I can't understand modern games, because I don't know where the computer ends and the analysis starts, and it's interesting to see people's comments explaining what they thought were critical moments in the game.'

Do you still think a lot about your own chess, the games you played? Any nostalgia?

'No, no. There is nostalgia, but when I am thinking about chess it's not really so much about my own games.'

Do you go online to follow tournaments?

'No. I do look at the ChessBase website and follow the very top tournaments a bit. Again, I am not so paralysed by my interest in chess that I do it all the time.'

And you must barely have time...

'No, no, it's relaxing, but I don't have the understanding I wish I had. But I enjoy it, it's a fantastic resource.' ■

MARIA BOLSHAKOVA

For the 53rd time Reggio Emilia celebrated the New Year with fireworks and a chess tournament. Vugar Gashimov welcomed 2011 by winning first prize in the Torneo di Capodanno.

The

‘Three years ago, when I finished second here in Reggio Emilia, my father told me that the trophy awarded to the winner was very pretty. I promised to win the cup for him next time. Today I’m so happy that I was able to keep that promise!’ said Vugar Gashimov after his victory at the 53rd Torneo di Capodanno. While no one has ever found the alchemy required to win a chess tournament – the golden formula combining the perfect amounts of skill, courage, luck, preparation, nerves and stamina – **Janis Nisii** believes that it was probably the extra motivation to deliver on a promise to his father that gave the 24-year-old grandmaster from Azerbaijan the extra drive that ultimately fuelled his success.

JANIS NISII

Promise

The 2007-2008 edition to which Gashimov was referring above, marked an important milestone for Reggio Emilia. The *Torneo di Capodanno* chose to celebrate its 50th anniversary with one of the most captivating closed tournaments ever played on Italian soil, a category XVII event directed by Italian chess publisher and organizer Yuri Garrett. The icing on the (birthday) cake was, in the best tradition of chess writing, a book on the tournament (*Reggio Emilia 2007-2008,* published by Quality Chess) written by acclaimed chess author GM Mihail Marin (who also played in the event) and Garrett. The book is a treasure-trove of annotated games, behind-the-scenes stories, photographs, biographies, interviews and impressions.

That Jubilee edition represented a turning point for the event, restoring its world-class ranking after many years of lesser fame. The passionate work of the local Chess Club Ippogrifo and the technical director Yuri Garrett, which continued for the next two editions, generated a renewed interest in one of the oldest international chess tournaments. Significant financial support provided by a new private sponsor was responsible for further raising the category of this year's Reggio Emilia.

'This is the strongest chess event ever played in Italy!' sponsor Ezio Montalbini proudly proclaimed, 'the average rating is 2695. We missed Category XIX by only six points!' But even though the playing field was quite impressive this year, my thoughts wandered back to the legendary 1991-92 edition – something that Montalbini must have guessed, because he quickly added: 'The 1992 edition was a Cate-

MARIA BOLSHAKOVA

Alexander Morozevich talks to Martha Fierro after one of his games. The Russian's participation caused great excitement and anticipation.

JANIS NISII

On January 1, Fabiano Caruana appeared in first place on the FIDE Junior list. The local favourite's play in Reggio was rather cautious.

MARIA BOLSHAKOVA

Having lost two games in Rounds 6 and 7, Vasily Ivanchuk wore an Accademia Internazionale di Scacchi sweatshirt in the final rounds and won both games.

gory XVIII just like this one, but the average Elo was *only* 2676.' The final standings of the 1992 edition had the following names: Anand, Gelfand, Kasparov, Karpov, Ivanchuk, Khalifman, Polugaevsky, Salov, Gurevich and Beliavsky, making it the strongest tournament ever at the time. Just in case someone still needed further evidence of chess rating inflation.

While the Ippogrifo Chess Club is still the organizer, a completely new team was running the tournament. Instead of applying the Sofia rules they had decided to invite fighting players to avoid short and fightless draws. 'As a tournament player myself,' technical director IM Roberto Mogranzini explained, 'I think that draws are part of our game and that early draws are elements of a player's tournament strategy. The public has to understand that players are not machines. I think it's a mistake to separate the psychological and the technical aspects of the game.'

Mogranzini thinks that anti-drawing rules can also badly affect the level of play, saying, 'If a player lost a game he was forced to play on in, this can dishearten him and influence his play over the next rounds. An early draw, instead, can put him back on track after a bad loss and boost his confidence.'

The stats seem to prove him right. There were 23 decisive games out of 45 and only seven short (under 30 moves) draws in which the names of the two winners were involved five times. The tournament produced more than 80 per cent of entertaining chess, including two checkmates delivered on the board in the last round. Speaking of statistics, Short's score (+3 =1 –5) is perhaps the result of his taking the expression 'uncompromising play' to extremes.

Probably only Fabiano Caruana would have played differently under the Sofia rules. The 18-year-old local hero settled for a draw a bit early on a few occasions, but both Caruana and his fans had good reason to be happy when during the tournament, on January 1, FIDE published the new ratings and he appeared in first place on the Junior list.

Ivanchuk said that the absence of anti-drawing rules makes things more comfortable for the players. When asked to elaborate on the differences between this and the historic edition of 1992, in which he also participated, his reply was surprisingly intimate and decidedly more bitter than expected: 'There are no differences in the tournament, I see differences in myself. I have a completely different age, another vision of life and another vision of chess. I am more quiet now and I need to find non-stop inspiration to analyse the games. Twenty years ago I was extremely ambitious, whereas being always in a fighting mood is not so easy anymore.'

The tournament atmosphere was relaxed and friendly. To quote the words of Paco Vallejo: 'The organization is very sociable and warm, they make you really feel like home among friends. They take care of everything and whatever you ask them you can be sure they'll try their best to fulfil your wishes.'

The organizers, on their part, were impressed by the players' friendliness and availability, noting that they never shied away from talking to the fans and the press and analysing their games for the public. Some of the players could be seen playing blitz games with the tournament staff or, like Navara, with a 9-year-old fan.

There had been great excitement and anticipation among chess enthusiasts regarding Alexander Morozevich's participation, as well as curiosity and speculation about his infrequent over-the-board play of late. 'I don't think I need to explain why so many people are fond of his bright and spectacular style,' said Roberto Mogranzini. 'He's a unique player who reached the second spot in the FIDE world rankings in 2008. We went to Pamplona, where he was playing in

July, practically only to invite him. He's very nice and friendly.'

'I can imagine there are rumours about him,' continued Mogranzini, 'but we all know only too well how those things arise. For example, due to bad weather, Moscow airport was shut on the day he had to leave for Reggio. Had he not arrived here, do you think that in three months' time people would have remembered that this was due to weather conditions? Or would they rather have said that Moro once again didn't show up at a tournament that he had been invited to?' 'My experience,' he concluded, 'is that Moro made every possible effort to be here. He took the trouble to undergo a never-ending journey, including a nine-hour trip by train from Moscow to St. Petersburg.'

When asked why he's playing so infrequently, Morozevich shrugged and replied that he's simply not getting many invitations. He played quite well in Reggio Emilia, scoring less than he probably deserved due to blunders in winning positions so typical of lack of competitive play. Demonstrating a healthy degree of humility and humour, he said, 'Losing winning positions in one move – sometimes the *only* move that loses – is my exclusive talent! I don't know any other top guy who has this ability!'

As fans wait for Morozevich to dazzle them once again with his best game, he offered this reassuring thought on his love of the game: 'I love playing tournaments in small towns,' he said, voicing his general impressions on Reggio Emilia. 'Some players may find it boring, but I like to see people of different ages coming here to watch the games, I get way more inspired to play! Some prefer to play in big cities and fashionable places. But I certainly get enough excitement by simply playing chess over the board.'

While the two superstars of the tournament, Ivanchuk and Morozevich, didn't perform at their best, Vugar Gashimov and Paco Vallejo stole the show. They had an excellent performance with a series of curious symmetries. They finished with the same score (6/9, Gashimov winning on tiebreaks), they were the only two players with a rating performance above 2800, they both had the nerves to react to a bad loss, and they both scored 3½/4, respectively in the last and the first four games.

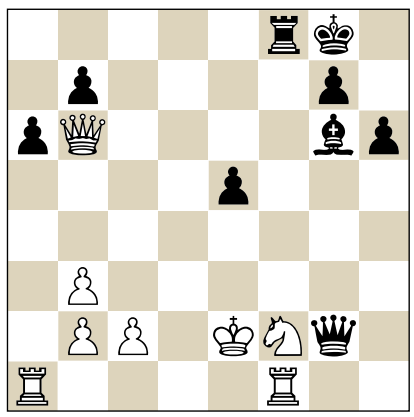
Vallejo didn't have any expectations before the tournament because in his last two games in the Bundesliga he had 'played horribly'. He couldn't really explain his good result, because nothing seemed to have changed since then. 'The outcome of a game is decided by such a combination of factors that we can't possibly have everything under control. Small details can make the difference. In this tournament, for example, I offered one or two draws that were rejected and then I won the game. But against Gashimov I played the crucial blunder a fraction of a second too quickly, only to realize it was a mistake as soon as I placed my knight on e3.' Vallejo often stated that Italy is, together with Mexico, his favourite country to play in. This may have played a role in getting into the tournament in the first rounds.

> Alexander Morozevich: 'Losing winning positions in one move - sometimes the *only* move that loses - is my exclusive talent!'

Gashimov's tournament can be summarized with the aphorism 'losers always find excuses, winners always find a way.' The Azeri had a couple of excuses ready for a potentially poor result: he caught a cold and was sick during the whole tournament, and he had lost the first round to Nigel Short. 'I was able to react to this loss because I was impressed by my own play,' Gashimov said. 'I liked it how I sacrificed the exchange and then played h6 and ♔h7: I was right, the position was just equal. Then I happened to go wrong, but at least I played bravely.' Bravely enough to sacrifice another piece and keep playing for a win while being a whole rook down!

SI 14.8 – B90
Nigel Short
Vugar Gashimov
Reggio Emilia 2010/11 (1)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗e3 e5 7.♘f3 ♗e7 8.♗c4 0-0 9.0-0 ♘c6 10.♖e1 ♗e6 11.♗b3 ♘a5 12.♗g5 ♘xb3 13.axb3 ♘d7 14.♗xe7 ♕xe7 15.♘d2 ♘b6 16.♘f1 f5 17.exf5 ♗xf5 18.f4 ♗g6 19.fxe5 dxe5 20.♕e2 ♕h4 21.♕e3 ♖f6 22.♘e4 ♖xf1+ 23.♔xf1 ♕xh2 24.♘f2 ♖f8 25.♕xb6 ♕h1+ 26.♔e2 ♕xg2 27.♖f1 h6

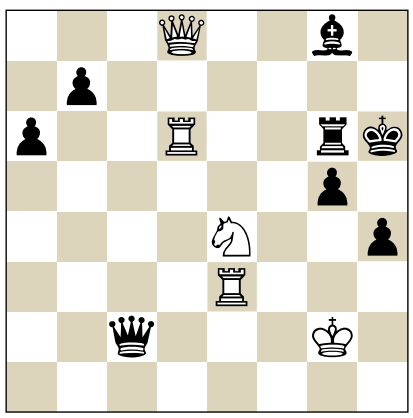


MARIA BOLSHAKOVA

Photo above: Giuseppe Ferraroni (President of Chess Club Ippogrifo), Gianpietro Pagnoncelli (President of the Italian Chess Federation), winner Vugar Gashimov and Roberto Mogranzini.

Below: David Navara lost his way in the last-round thriller against Vugar Gashimov.

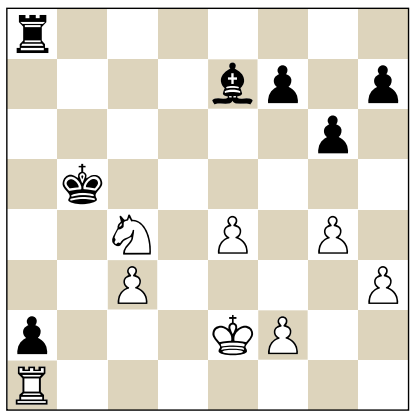
28.♔d2 ♖f6 29.♕c5 ♔h7 30.♖ae1 ♖c6 31.♕xe5 ♖xc2+ 32.♔e3 ♕c6 33.♘e4 ♕b6+ 34.♔f4 ♕xb3 35.♖f3 ♕b4 36.♖c3 ♖f2+ 37.♔g3 ♖f5 38.♕e6 ♕xb2 39.♖c8 h5 40.♕g8+ ♔h6 41.♕h8+ ♗h7 42.♕d8 g5 43.♘d2 ♖f6 44.♖c7 h4+ 45.♔g2 ♗g8 46.♖d7 ♕c3 47.♖e3 ♕c6+ 48.♘e4 ♖g6 49.♖d6 ♕c2+



50.♔g1 ♕b1+ 51.♔f2 ♕a2+ 52.♖e2 ♕f7+ 53.♔g1 ♕f5 54.♘f6 ♕c5+ 55.♔h2
1-0.

Gashimov considered his win against Ivanchuk as the turning point of his tournament. 'Not only was I able to use a strong novelty that I had prepared last summer,' he explained, 'but it was also the kind of novelty you have to find without the computer's help. Because it's the idea that works here, not the calculation.'

This win probably gave him the right boost to face Vallejo with black and post a victory that proved crucial for the final result. 'I managed to surprise Paco with 1....g6,' he recalls, 'and this perhaps already put him in a worse psychological position.'



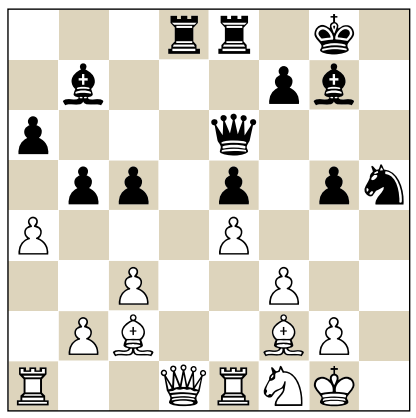
Vallejo-Gashimov
position after 45...♔b5

To be fair, a bit of luck was involved here, as White could have held the position by playing 46.♘b2! instead of **46.♘e3?**, but, while it's probably an invalid argument to connect this mistake to his opening surprise – as Gashimov seems to imply – conversely, it is a bit artificial to dissect a game taking out parts that could have changed the final result.

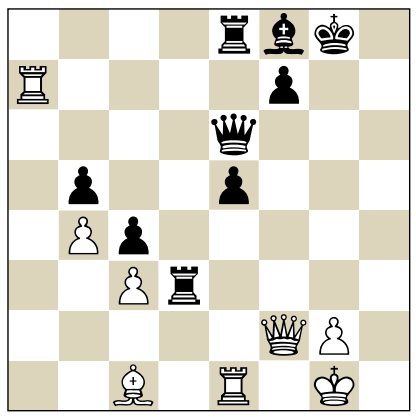
Gashimov-Navara in Round 8 was an extremely thrilling game, and to dismiss it superficially with comments such as 'White was much worse, then Black blundered and lost on time' would be a kind of chess sin.

RL 25.12 – C95
Vugar Gashimov
David Navara
Reggio Emilia 2010/11 (8)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.♖e1 b5 7.♗b3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 ♘b8 10.d4 ♘bd7 11.♘bd2 ♗b7 12.♗c2 ♖e8 13.♘f1 ♗f8 14.♗g5 h6 15.♗h4 g6 16.♘1h2 ♗g7 17.dxe5 dxe5 18.♘g4 g5 19.♗g3 ♘xg4 20.hxg4 ♕e7 21.a4 c5 22.♘d2 ♘f6 23.♘f1 ♕e6 24.f3 h5 25.gxh5 ♘xh5 26.♗f2 ♖ad8



27.♕c1 ♘f4 28.♘e3 ♕g6 29.axb5 axb5 30.♖a7 g4 31.fxg4 ♗xe4 32.♘f5 ♗xc2 33.♕xc2 ♕xg4 34.♗e3 c4 35.♖b7 ♖d3 36.♗xf4 ♕xf5 37.♗c1 ♕c8 38.♖a7 ♗f8 39.b4 ♕e6 40.♕f2



40...♖xc3 41.♗d2 ♖b3 42.♖f1 ♕d5 43.♗e3 ♖xe3 44.♖xf7 ♗h6 45.♕f5 ♕d3 46.♕g4+ ♔h8 47.♖7f6 ♖h3 48.gxh3 ♕h7 49.♔h1 ♗f4 50.♕f3 ♖g8 51.♖b6 ♕c2 52.♕h5+ ♕h7 53.♕xh7+ ♔xh7 54.♖f3
1-0.

In this game, it was an extra dose of determination that made the difference for Gashimov. As the winner of the tournament put it: 'During the game I understood that Vallejo was winning against Onischuk and that I was therefore in a must-win situation. My will to fight started to grow, I knew that I could do it.'

I objected to his point, and suggested that Navara was actually playing extremely well and that Black was much better. 'True,' Vugar replied, 'but at the same time our kings were both unsafe and there were many threats for both sides: it's the kind of situation where opportunities arise. He blundered when he played 40...♖xc3, which looks fine, but then I found a very strong idea with ♗d2 and ♖f1. While computers claim that Black is still better, I believe that the position is already unclear at this point and I think David understood that something had gone wrong.'

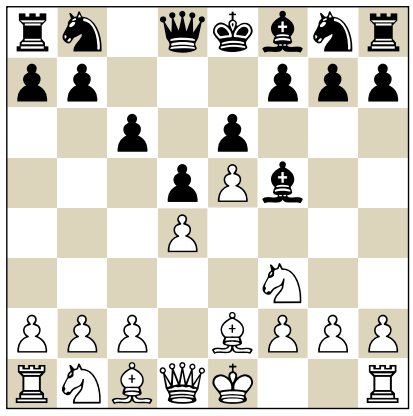
We can't be sure if the following psychological insight reflects what really happened inside Navara's mind, but readers will recognize the typical situation Gashimov described: 'You make one mistake and you don't like your position as much as you did before. This causes your next mistake, you start feeling that the position is not as safe as it used to be. At this point you realize you have already given away some chances. This is when I played 43.♗e3 and then 44.♖xf7, moves that are quite strong. The position was full of possibilities and if you have a psychological disadvantage, you come under pressure and it's easy to blunder. Instead, I used my chances and he ran out of time when his position was already losing.'

'I am very proud of having played the best moves exactly when it was required. I think that after move 40 I played the strongest chess of my tournament! I really enjoyed my play here. Not only did I win the event, but I think I played quite interesting chess. Before this event I thought that it was impossible to combine the two!

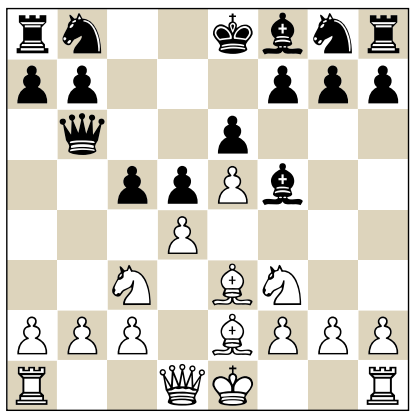
NOTES BY
Vugar Gashimov

CK 4.11 – B12
Vugar Gashimov
Vasily Ivanchuk
Reggio Emilia 2010/11 (6)

Well, I wanted to win this game, since after five rounds I had only 50 per cent. But I understood that it wouldn't be so easy, since my opponent is a very strong and well-known chess player.
1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 ♗f5 4.♘f3 e6 5.♗e2

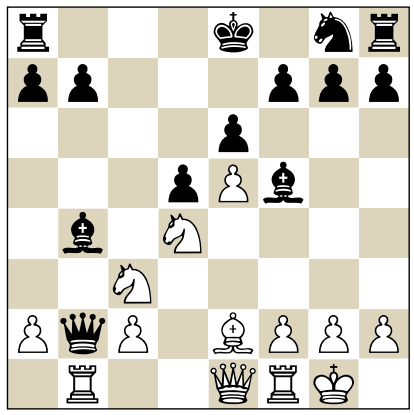


5...c5
Not so long ago we had played this position in the European Rapid Championship in Warsaw. On that occasion Ivanchuk played 5...♘e7.
6.♗e3 ♕b6 7.♘c3

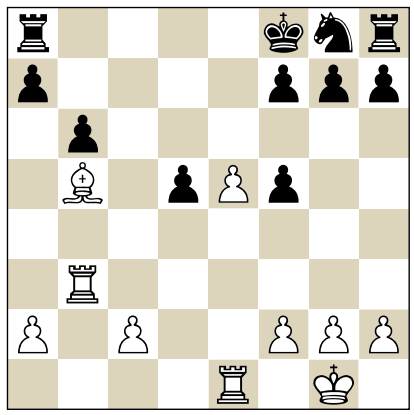


I was pretty satisfied that we played this position. It is generally known that it is very difficult to prepare something special against Ivanchuk, since he can play any opening. However, I had deeply analysed the line with 6...♕b6 last summer, so this made me happy.

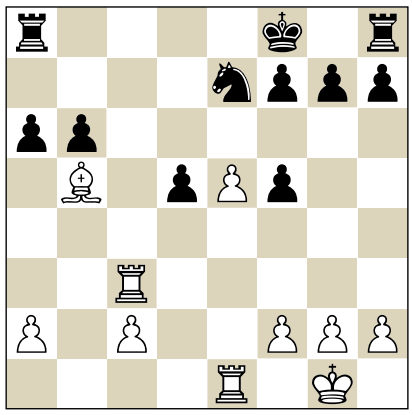
7...♘c6
Another possible move here is 7...♕xb2.
8.0-0 ♕xb2 9.♕e1 cxd4 10.♗xd4 ♘xd4 11.♘xd4 ♗b4 12.♖b1



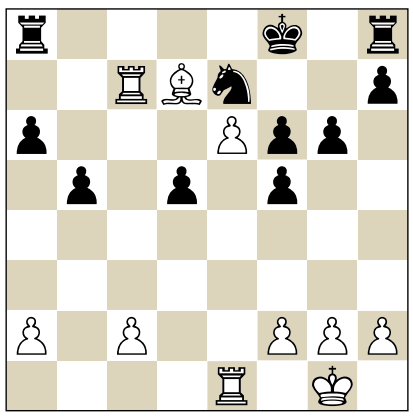
12...♗xc3
Thus far, we have been repeating the game Svidler-Stellwagen, Amsterdam 2009. Here Stellwagen went 12...♕xc3.
13.♖xb2 ♗xe1 14.♖xe1 b6 15.♗b5+ ♔f8 16.♘xf5 exf5 17.♖b3!



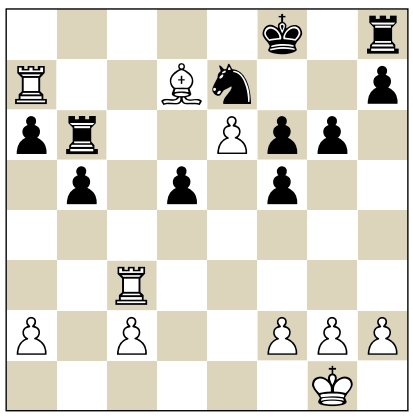
This is exactly what my idea consisted of! White simply wants to transfer his rook to c7, when Black's position would seem to be lost. I certainly hadn't expected to be able to use this plan against such a strong opponent.
17...♘e7
17...♖c8 was stronger, although after 18.♖a3 a5 19.♗d3 ♘e7 20.♖b3 ♖c6 21.♖eb1 ♘g6 22.♖xb6 ♖xb6 23.♖xb6 White is clearly better.
18.♖c3 a6
Now it's already too late to play 18...♖c8, because of 19.♖xc8+ ♘xc8 20.♖d1 ♔e7 (or 20...♘e7 21.f4!) 21.♖xd5 ♖d8 22.c4, and White dominates the black pieces.



19.♗d7! This is the problem! Now the bishop controls the most important square in this position, c8, to win the game. **19...g6 20.♖c7 b5 21.e6 f6** After 21...fxe6 22.♗xe6 Black's position is also close to lost.



22.♖e3! The e-file is closed, so we have to move our rook to the open file. **22...♖b8 23.♖a7 ♖b6 24.♖c3**



The second rook takes the same tour to c7. **24...h5 25.♗c8 ♖h7 26.♖cc7 f4** More persistent was 26...♖d6 27.♖xa6 ♖d8 28.♗d7 but here, too, White wins. **27.♖a8** Black resigned. After this win, I had caught the right spirit and managed to win two more games. And all these wins helped me to win the tournament!

NOTES BY
Paco Vallejo

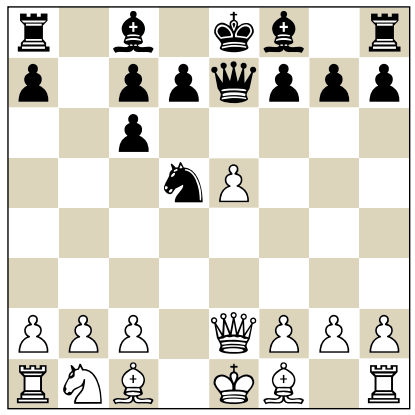
SO 4.3 – C45
Paco Vallejo
Alexander Onischuk
Reggio Emilia 2010/11 (8)

In general I played a very nice tournament, trying to play solidly with black and get a playable position with white. Everything worked out perfectly till my game against Gashimov, in which I played a horrible opening, got into a little time-pressure, but still managed to stay in the game. When the hard work was already done, I made a terrible blunder, ♘e3 instead of ♘b2,

> 'I guess that when people prepare against me... they can expect almost any opening.'

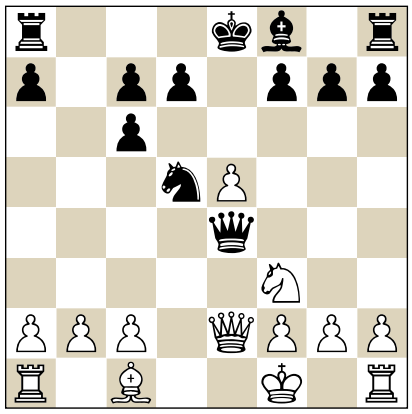
which cost me the tournament, although Vugar was probably lucky in that game and also in the next game against Navara, which he won from a lost position. But as I said in my Twitter, he was fighting well and then luck sometimes helps you. Anyway, I won 14 Elo points in Reggio Emilia and improved my results against a few top guys. I think I made my first draw with Chuky with the black pieces, as well as my first victory over Navara after two losses. So, all in all I am pretty happy!

1.e4 e5
Once again 1...e5 appeared on the board, for the third time in the tournament. In the first round against Godena I played the Evans Gambit, later against Navara the Spanish Exchange and in for this game we had prepared another small surprise.
2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4!?
I guess that when people prepare against me... they can expect almost any opening. It was some time since I played my last Scotch.
3...exd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6
Alex plays both main moves, 4...♗c5 and 4...♘f6.
5.♘xc6 bxc6 6.e5 ♕e7 7.♕e2 ♘d5

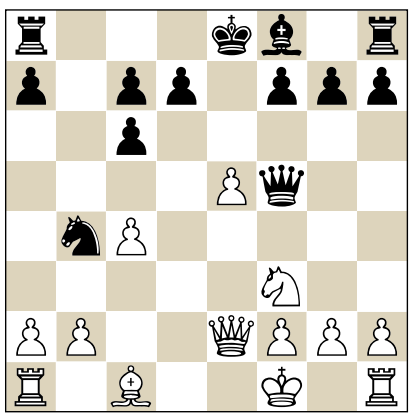


8.♘d2!?
This is not a 'normal' move, and I expected it to have a very surprising effect, but Onischuk replied quite fast.
8...♗b7!?
'Bad luck', I thought to myself. Now I was out of book after having been the first to deviate. There were many other options for Black, such as 8...♖b8, 8...♘f4, 8...g6, 8...a5 and 8...♕e6.
9.♘f3 ♕b4+
An interesting alternative is 9...0-0-0!?, when White can continue 10.♗d2 or 10.c4.
10.♕d2 The only move. **10...♕e4+!** Clearly better than 10...0-0-0?! 11.♗e2! d6?! (11...♘f4? 12.c3) 12.♘g5!.
11.♗e2 ♗a6
11...♘b4!? was an interesting option, going for a sharp position: 12.♔d1 0-0-0 (12...c5) 13.a3 ♘d5 14.c4 ♘b6 15.♘g5 ♕g6 16.♗d3 f5.
12.♔f1

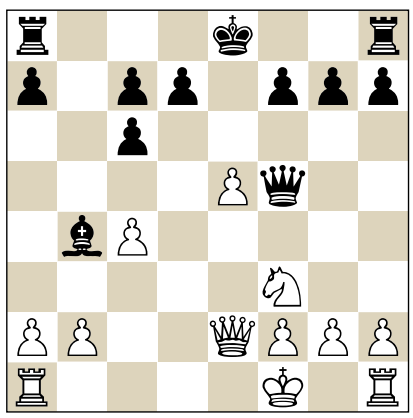
Again White's only reasonable choice.
12...♗xe2+ 13.♕xe2



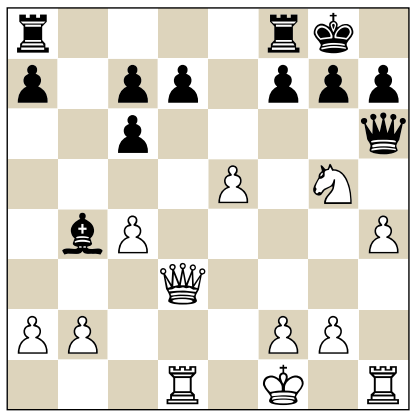
13...♕f5?!
I was quite happy when I saw this move on the board. Alexander probably wanted to take advantage of my painful loss due to a terrible mistake in my previous game against Gashimov, but objectively speaking this move cannot be good.
Better were 13...♕xe2+ 14.♔xe2 d6 or 13...f5.
14.c4
Another tempting option was 14.♘d4!?, which also leads to a pleasant position for White: 14...♕g6 15.h4 c5 (15...h5) 16.h5 ♕b6.
14...♘b4
Alternatives were 14...♘b6 15.♘d4 ♕g6 16.h4 h5 17.♗g5 ♗c5 18.♘b3 ♗e7 19.♗xe7 ♔xe7, or 14...♘e7.



15.♗d2
Slightly more precise than the text-move was 15.a3!, for example: 15...♘d3 16.♘d4! ♕g6 17.h4 ♗c5 18.h5 ♘xc1 19.♖xc1 ♕g5 20.♖d1 ♗xd4 21.♖xd4, with advantage for White.
15...♗c5!?
Bad was 15...♘xa2?, because of 16.♘d4 ♕g6 17.f4, and White is clearly better. But 15...♗e7 was a reasonable alternative.
16.♗xb4! My first intention was to bring the bishop to c3, but there is no time for that, so I just decided to simplify the position.
16...♗xb4



17.♖d1
Another good move is 17.♘d4.
17...0-0
He could also have tried 17...♗c5!?.
18.♕d3! ♕e6!
18...♕xd3+ 19.♖xd3 leads to a more pleasant ending for White, although Black can hold with good play: 19...d6! or 19...♖ad8 20.♔e2 ♗c5!.
19.♘g5 ♕h6 20.h4!
The best way to coordinate White's pieces.



20...♖ad8?!

Pre-game witticisms. Paco Vallejo has something funny to say to Sergey Movsesian and happily awaits the effect of his words. Having severed his ties with the Slovakian chess federation and playing under the Armenian flag again, Movsesian won one game, drew the rest and finished shared third.

MARIA BOLSHAKOVA

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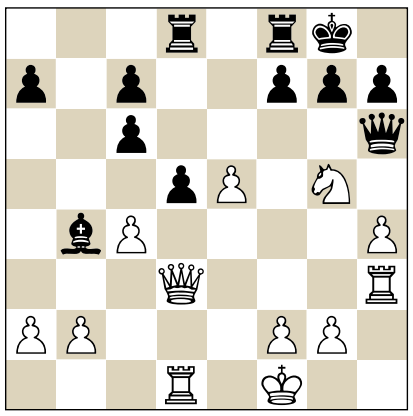
After 20...♗e7 White continues 21.♖h3. But I was much more worried about 20...♖ae8!, immediately attacking my weak e5 pawn before I have time to deploy the rook on h1: 21.a3 ♗e7 22.♖h3.

21.♖h3

The natural way to develop pieces, although 21.g3!? was also an interesting option.

21...d5?!

A natural reaction, but already a mistake.

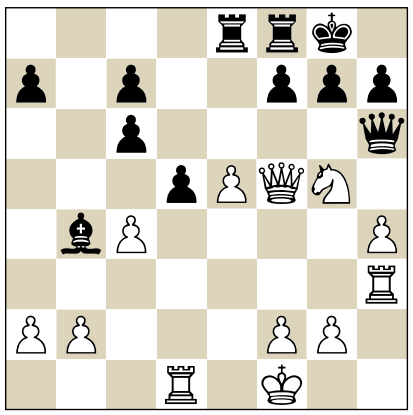


22.♕f5!

A beautiful idea. From f5 the queen will attack h7 and f7, while the rook on h3 will try to find a better square, probably d3 or f3. Now White has a sizable advantage.

22...♖de8!

The best defence in a difficult position. On 22...♗c5 White continues 23.♖f3, and 22...dxc4?? loses on the spot to 23.♖xd8 ♖xd8 24.♕xf7+.



23.♖f3!?

I spent around 10 minutes on this move, trying to calculate the main black options, but that left me with only 13 minutes on the clock. It is a decent move and best of all it prepares a carefully hidden trap.

As usual the computer shows the most precise play, and here this was 23.cxd5!, but during the game I wasn't sure about the ideas involving ...f6!: 23...cxd5 (on 23...f6 White has 24.exf6 ♖xf6 25.♕g4) 24.a3! (bad is 24.♖xd5? because of 24...f6!, and the game becomes very unclear!) 24...♗c5 25.♖xd5 ♗b6, and White's advantage should be decisive.

> 'A wonderful idea, one of the most wonderful I have found over the board lately.'

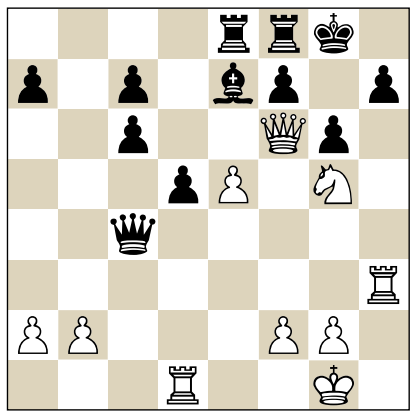
23...♕xh4?

This came as a surprise. I was pretty sure I had calculated the following lines accurately, but you can never be sure that you have not missed something and that a very strong opponent would not find a hole in your ideas.

Best was 23...dxc4!!, a difficult defensive move which leaves Black worse but not lost!: 24.♘xf7 (24.a3!? leads to nothing after 24...♗e7 25.♘xf7 ♕g6! 26.♕xg6 hxg6 27.e6 ♗f6!; and after 24.♖d4 Black has the annoying 24...f6!) 24...♕xh4 25.♖h3 g6 26.♖xh4 gxf5 27.♘h6+ ♔g7 28.f4.

24.♖h3 ♕xc4+ 25.♔g1 g6 26.♕f6 ♗e7

In case of 26...h5 27.♖xh5! gxh5 28.♕f5 there is no escape for the black king.



27.♘xh7!!

A wonderful idea, one of the most wonderful I have found over the board lately.

27...♕g4 28.♕xe7!!

Black resigned. When you think chess is also an art, you cannot miss the opportunity to play such a move in your game. I had this picture in mind when I played 23.♖f3!? !!

Obviously, 28.♖dd3 was winning as well, but that move was too prosaic compared to the game move. ■

Reggio Emilia 2010/11 — **cat. XVIII**

					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		TPR
1	Vugar Gashimov	IGM	AZE	2733	*	1	½	1	1	½	½	½	0	1	6	2815
2	Paco Vallejo	IGM	ESP	2698	0	*	½	1	½	½	1	½	1	1	6	2819
3	Sergei Movsesian	IGM	ARM	2721	½	½	*	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	5	2735
4	David Navara	IGM	CZE	2708	0	0	½	*	1	1	½	0	1	1	5	2736
5	Vasily Ivanchuk	IGM	UKR	2764	0	½	½	0	*	½	½	1	1	1	5	2730
6	Fabiano Caruana	IGM	ITA	2709	½	½	½	0	½	*	½	½	1	½	4½	2693
7	Alexander Onischuk	IGM	USA	2683	½	0	½	½	½	½	*	1	½	½	4½	2696
8	Alexander Morozevich	IGM	RUS	2700	½	½	½	1	0	½	0	*	0	1	4	2651
9	Nigel Short	IGM	ENG	2680	1	0	0	0	0	0	½	1	*	1	3½	2616
10	Michele Godena	IGM	ITA	2549	0	0	½	0	0	½	½	0	0	*	1½	2438

Short Stories

Of Beasts and Books

And naturally every Tom, Dick or Harry now feels entitled to annotate any grandmaster game.

On the 21st February 1978, a 12 year-old boy, sitting in the boardroom of a branch of Lloyd's Bank in Cornhill, London, played a 10 game blitz match remotely against the World Champion Computer 'Chess 4.6', located in Arden Hills, Minneapolis. The programme ran on the world's fastest computer, Cyber 176, capable of following 12-15 million 'instructions' per second. The result, 6½-3½, was a convincing enough victory for homo sapiens, although the margin was flattered somewhat by the machine metaphorically blowing a fuse in game two (blundering its queen while erroneously announcing 'mate') and losing on time in a totally winning position in game eight.

That same person –nowadays a slightly-portly, middle-aged, 45 year old grandmaster – occasionally tries his hand at blitz against one of the more modest programmes on his laptop, such as Fritz 12, to help while away the long and dull hours spent in airport lounges. The rational part of his brain is fully conscious of the utter futility of this quixotic exercise: so great is the disparity in strength between the silicon and carbon-based antagonists that the odd draw here or there is now the absolute limit of this particular human's ambition. Alas rarely, if ever, does he achieve his goal...

For better or worse we have come a very long way. It is almost impossible to overstate the impact of the computer revolution on the game of chess during the last few decades. In a generation the computer has gone from being a distant object of mild ridicule – the preserve of boffins in laboratories – to becoming the ubiquitous and indispensible tool for even the humblest of club players.

The corollary to the inexorable rise of the engine has been the steep decline in importance of the former traditional repository of wisdom – the book. Indeed many of today's generation of exceptionally fine young chess players barely possess more than a tiny handful of tomes – if any. Incomprehensible to them is the thrill with which every ambitious player of yesteryear scoured 'the Bible' – otherwise known as Chess Informant – for the latest novelties. Viewed from 2011, it must seem as quaint and ridiculous an activity as buying a pornographic magazine. Why bother when you have everything, and better, at the click of a mouse? Even for those of a nostalgic inclination – like your author – time has moved on: Informants these days get no more than a cursory 10 minute perusal before being consigned forever to the shelves, never to be opened again. Gone, without regret, are the dubious hernia-inducing pleasures of lugging bulky volumes of ECO ('Encyclopaedia of Chess Openings' to the uninitiated) from tournament to tournament.

With his customary vision, Garry Kasparov was one of the first of the old school to fully embrace the new technology. It may seem obvious with hindsight, but when one was struggling in the 1980s with primitive programmes like ChessBase 1.0 and 40MB hard disks on the potential value of such an investment of time and energy was not immediately evident.

By the time of the 1993 World Championship Match in London, however, even a Luddite technophobe like myself had realized how essential computers were. My team had carefully assembled a database by supplementing the commercially available core with thousands of hand-imputted games. The grand total – a mere 230,000 games, lest my memory fails me –is risible by today's obese quantitive standards.

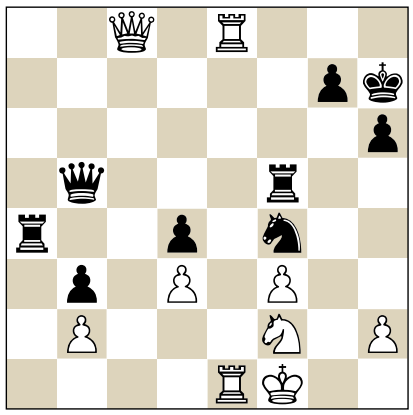
Times were clearly a-changing, but nevertheless it came as a shock to me when, in Sarajevo, a few years later, while admiring the excellent library at the home of the German Ambassador, Garry Kimovich mentioned to me, sotto voce, that he didn't really read chess books any more. What would the patriarch of Soviet chess, Mikhail Botvinnik, have said about that, eh? Ironically, Garry is now author of the splendid unread series of our time – 'My Great Predecessors'. Almost everyone has them, of course, – probably even the Anish Giri generation – as if the possession of these magnificent works by an undisputed genius suffices by itself to raise one's Elo. But, as I have often found when mentioning some classic game and being met by a blank stare that not too many people have taken the trouble to examine the contents. Garry's analy-

sis is far too intimidating and requires one not only to take out a board and set but to painstakingly grapple with labyrinthine variations. No – it is far easier to plonk them on the shelf and admire the hard covers in their nice, red dust-jackets...

One interesting effect of the relentless advancement of chess software is that the chasm between the computer cognoscenti and ignorant plebs (the group to which I belong), in contrast to earlier times, is now steadily diminishing. For example, once upon a time almost any useful action with a database required rote-memorisation of a series of complicated operations. Nowadays referencing, trees, statistics – you name it – is done with a simple mouse-click. This parallels the development in motoring where, in the early days, no one dared to set off on a journey without spanners, oil, spark-plugs, jump-leads and an advanced degree in mechanics. So reliable have cars become that one can drive for years without even knowing how to open the bonnet.

Every now and then it is liberating to dispense with technology altogether. I first discovered this in Jakarta 1995 at the start of my match with Utut (now Senator) Adianto. Barely had I checked into the hotel when my laptop died an anguished and unnatural death. Rather than panicking and looking for a replacement, I decided to relax and do without. Improvising here and there, I romped to victory by a 4½-1½ margin. Upon reaching home, with my laptop still busted, I decided to check the openings the old-fashioned way using ECO. One particular game – a Queen's Indian Defence – intrigued me, as I had equalized rather comfortably with black, although experience told me that it should not have been so easy. To my great surprise I found that we had been following the main line and that I had inadvertently improved on some ridiculous knight advance that had previously been played. So patently absurd was this premature lunge that I was very curious to discover which patzer had tried it. It turned out to be me, of course, and not in the most obscure game either – against Karpov from Amsterdam (VSB) 1988. I had lost so hideously that I had obviously consigned it to my mental 'delete' box.

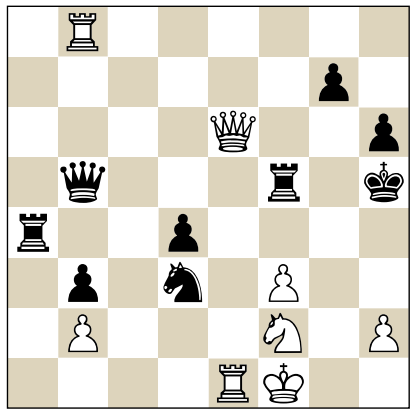
In our brave new world, anyone armed with an engine (i.e. just about everyone) has the feeling of omnipotence. While in some ways the democratisation of information is quite admirable, it also has its downsides. It is particularly irksome when watching elite tournaments online to find boorish competition from certain spectators to cut and paste Rybka-generated variations ending in some evaluation like +0.72 – as if that provides any sort of explanation or understanding. And naturally every Tom, Dick or Harry now feels entitled to annotate any grandmaster game. The result, all too often, is an appalling lack of humanity that ignores or, to be more precise, is completely unaware of the very essence of chess. For instance, at the latest tournament in Reggio Emilia I produced the following swindle:



Short-Morozevich
position after 33.♘f2

Morozevich, returning to chess after a long lay-off, had thoroughly outplayed me in the earlier phase of the game and had been totally winning. Now, however, after some serious imprecisions in impending time-trouble, he had greatly complicated matters. Becoming nervous, he erred with **33...♘xd3?** which wins in all variations except for...

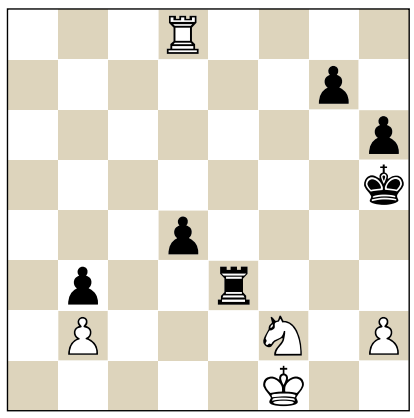
34.♖h8+ ♔g6 35.♕e6+! ♔h5 36. ♖b8!!



Look at the diagram and ask yourself whether this is an obvious trick. Well, it isn't. Firstly the queen obstructs the path to b8 and, besides, all the action is taking place on the kingside. Nevertheless Mark Crowther in TWIC and Frederic Friedel on ChessBase passed over this devilish deflection without the slightest comment. Real chess players, however, like Miso Cebalo and Hikaru Nakamura described it, in turn, as 'diabolical' and 'obscene'.

The game continued...

36...♕e5!? 37.♖xe5 ♖a1+ 38. ♖e1 Avoiding 38.♔g2?? ♘f4+, and mates. **38...♖xe1+ 39.♕xe1 ♘xe1 40.♔xe1 ♖xf3 41.♖d8 ♖e3+ 42.♔f1**



42...♖c3!?

This last-gasp try receives no less than two question marks from Friedel and three(!) from Crowther. In fact, any proper chess player can tell you it doesn't alter the evaluation one jot.

43.bxc3 dxc3 44.♘d3! 1-0

44.♖b8! also won but *NOT* anything else. ■

Moscow

The chess year in Russia traditionally ends with the Super Final of the national championship. All the strongest players in our country apart from Kramnik took part in this event. The serious contenders for the title this year were five-time Russian champion Peter Svidler, last year's Russian champion Alexander Grischuk, the winner of the Tal Memorial Tournament Sergey Karjakin and European champion Ian Nepomniachtchi. **Mark Glukhovsky** editor-in-chief of '64', reports.

For every person, if, of course, they're not a complete schlemazel, as my grandmother puts it (which, as every cultured person knows, means a screw-up, an idiot, or a loser in Yiddish), well, if that person isn't a complete schlemazel, sooner or later the time will come in their life when everything is going fantastically. Happiness comes of its own accord, and your life starts to resemble an obliging and even slightly bothersome waiter.

The brilliant Russian writer Isaac Babel, who was shot (as every cultured person knows) in 1940 by the Bolsheviks for having too much talent, described this unbelievable, amazing condition like this: 'You are a tiger, you are a lion, you are a cat. You can spend the night with a Russian woman, and the Russian woman will be satisfied by you. You are 25 years old. If the sky and earth had rings attached to them, you would grab these rings and pull the sky down to the earth.' So as not to go deeply into a fascinating subject, but one that's far removed from a chess magazine, we'll end the literary allusions for now and establish the main point of this story: the 20-year-old Russian champion Ian Nepomniachtchi is in that same condition in life, when everything is going fantastically.

Nepomniachtchi began 2010 on the 69th spot of the rating list, and ended it on the 15th. During the year Ian won almost all the tournaments he played in. He won two very tough Swiss tournaments: the European Championship and the Premier League of the Russian Championship. He almost won the Aeroflot Open, performed superbly in team events (on first board for the club Ural and for the Russian youth team at the Olympiad), and came second (behind Ivanchuk) at the Capablanca Memorial. His win in the Super Final of the Russian Championship provided a conclusion to a very important stage in Nepomniachtchi's career – the growing-up stage. No matter how his performance at Wijk aan Zee will turn out, which is how 2011 begins, Ian will be far from an outsider going into one of the most important tournaments on the world calendar. From now on he's a worthy representative of his generation.

A generation that is very impressive, we should point out. Possibly the only generation that from a historical point of view can compete with the generation of today's 40-year-olds, who currently hold many of the commanding heights in chess. Carlsen, Karjakin and Nepomniachtchi! All three of them were born in 1990. Experts and journalists have been talking about this trio for a long time, but only now is it becoming obvious that it really is a 'big three', and that it really does exist, not only in our imaginations. That is, everything was already clear with Carlsen two years ago, but it's impossible not to admire the progress of Karjakin and Nepomniachtchi in the past year. A confrontation between these two grandmasters also ultimately determined the main theme of the Russian Championship that just finished.

Then again, after the first rounds it seemed that the main battle would play out between five-time Russian champion Peter Svidler and newly-minted Russian Sergey Karjakin. Karjakin beat Nepomniachtchi in the third round in a superb game and sent him back to the 50-percent starting point, while he himself led the race together with Svidler, who had got there without any ado. Peter is going through a difficult period at the moment, but he started brilliantly; you got the feeling that the other participants in the Super Final were 'answering' to Peter for all the humiliations of the departing year.

Before the only rest day of the tournament Svidler was leading with 4½ out of 6. Alas, he didn't have enough strength for an equally aggressive finish, but in order to supplant the leader Nepomniachtchi had to beat Svidler

BORIS DOLMATOVSKY

The European champion becomes Russian champion. What next?

For Ian Nepomniachtchi 2010 was the year of his definite breakthrough. Winning almost all tournaments he played in he shot up from the 69th spot in the world ranking to the 15th.
The sweetest victory was his win at the Russian Championship held in the last month of the year at the Central Chess Club.

The participants in the Super Final pose for a group portrait together with the managing director of the Russian Chess Federation, Ilya Levitov (centre), and Arkady Dvorkovich, the head of the Advisory Council of the RCF.

A combined post-mortem for the press by Evgeny Tomashevsky and Alexander Grischuk.

Ian Nepomniachtchi and Sergey Karjakin in the second game of the tie-break, which ended in a draw.

BORIS DOLMATOVSKY

in the ninth round – this turned out to be an extremely worthy game, one of the highlights of the tournament. Between his loss to Karjakin (Round 3) and his win against Svidler (Round 9) Nepomniachtchi beat Tomashevsky as White and Zviagintsev as Black, and that allowed him to be in contention before the last round. However, if Karjakin hadn't lost to Malakhov in the last round, it's Sergey who would have been Russian champion.

In fact, of course, it was Karjakin, not Nepomniachtchi, who was the most obvious contender for first place, the pre-tournament favourite. Sergey certainly deserves a long article of his own, but nevertheless his main achievement in 2010 was his win in the Tal Memorial. That tournament was covered, in considerable depth, in the previous issue of New In Chess. So Ian remains the hero of this story, and I'll say less about Sergey, although the quote from Babel with which I began the article also applies to him just as much.

And so, Sergey Karjakin was the Russian Championship's silver prize-winner. A player almost without flaws, a benchmark, you could say. His play, pure, like spring water, can provoke delight in the amateur who values the music of Chopin and the logic of chess. As White Sergey puts pressure on, and as Black he first equalizes and then seizes the initiative and outplays his opponent. Sergey attacks brilliantly, calculates deeply and cleanly, and has incredible knowledge of the openings. He's amazingly logical in the implementation of his plans. Moreover, Karjakin is almost the only player in the top ten who still plays e2-e4! on the first move, and that's worth a lot in our really crazy times, when 1.c4 and 1.e4 have virtually become equivalent.

Sergey is the ideal team player – it was he who took the Russian men's team to second place at the Olympiad. Basically, he's a prominent grandmaster who has been able to make the effort and from among those 'in whom great hopes were placed' made it to the

In fact it was Karjakin, not Nepomniachtchi, who was the most obvious contender for first place.

next level in 2010. To the level of those who are realistically vying for world leadership. Of course, we should talk about his progress in connection with his coach, Garry Kasparov's second for many years, Yury Dokhoian. It was their work together that led to these impressive results, and knowing Dokhoian's perfectionism we can be certain that Karjakin's forward movement will continue. Dokhoian's favourite work, eradicating flaws, will also continue, almost unnoticeably to the amateur's eye.

Two of Sergey's problems have caught my eye. The first, and most obvious one, is a lack of physical strength. Despite his youth, Sergey hardly does any exercise, and by the end of tournaments he often runs out of energy. This happened at the World Cup, the Olympiad, the European Club Cup and the Tal Memorial. The same thing happened at the Super Final too – Sergey suffered his only loss in the last round. Chess demands an endless amount of energy, and what happens when it runs out is what happened, for example, in the tiebreak against Nepomniachtchi. All three games (two rapid play and one blitz) were dictated by Karjakin, but they all ended in draws.

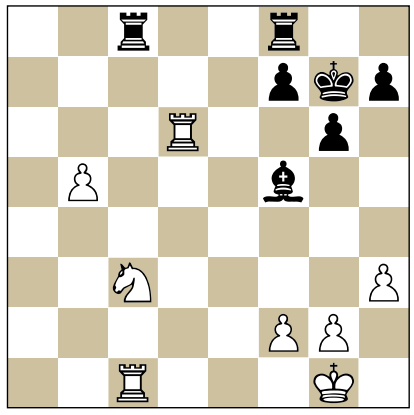
The second problem is a consequence of Karjakin's human qualities rather than his physical ones, the flip side of his friendliness and openness to the world. Sergey is an unusually nice and sincere person. It seems that he's even too good for a player of this class. That may be why, with all his enormous practical strength, Karjakin is a somewhat naïve player. Who else, choosing their colour for 'Armageddon' in the last blitz game that would decide the fate of the champion's title, would go for White – as with white you can only succeed with a win, while Black is fine with two other results? (And, by the way, according to statistics, Black wins in 90 percent of Armageddons).

It's unlikely that Karjakin didn't understand this simple maths, but he chose White anyway, to demonstrate his rightness in the most convincing way. It didn't work. And that wasn't surprising, as it isn't the laws of chess that are most influential in an Armageddon, but the laws of human psychology. Karjakin clearly isn't a psychologist, but more like a 'white knight', a fighter for good, and if we look for his predecessors, two people are the first to come to mind – Peter Leko and Vasily Vasilievich Smyslov.

Ian Nepomniachtchi is another matter. It isn't easy to find a predecessor for him, but when you do finally find one you'll be amazed at the number of parallels that can be drawn between the current Russian champion and Viktor Lvovich Kortchnoi. Like Kortchnoi, Nepomniachtchi likes material and is capable of inventively and stubbornly defending difficult, even lost positions. Like Kortchnoi, Nepomniachtchi is a brilliant tactician, but he doesn't like to sacrifice just for the sake of it, for the initiative. Like Kortchnoi, Nepomniachtchi is a superb blitz player. He's a games player generally, and if Kortchnoi spent his nights at the card table, Nepomniachtchi can spend the night before an important game going nuts on the Internet, in computer combat, in some strategy game or shoot 'em up.

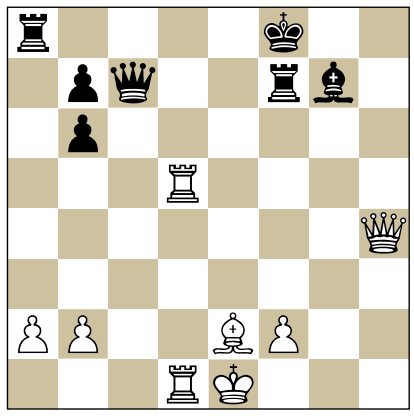
Like Viktor Lvovich, Ian gives a game – any game – everything he's got, no holds barred. Like Kortchnoi, he can be sharp to the point of being caustic and relentlessly self-critical. You'll rarely hear 'good game' from him, in the best case 'not bad', more often they both played badly or his opponent lost by himself. At the board Nepomniachtchi is always ready to do something clever, to dodge, to make a few moves without a plan, to change his plan, to maintain the tension, to make mistakes and correct mistakes, to take the game to the brink of defeat, but still achieve his goal by any means possible. This is a difficult, very energy-sapping path, but it's his path, and he has finally started achieving success on his path.

Let's now look at a few diagrams.



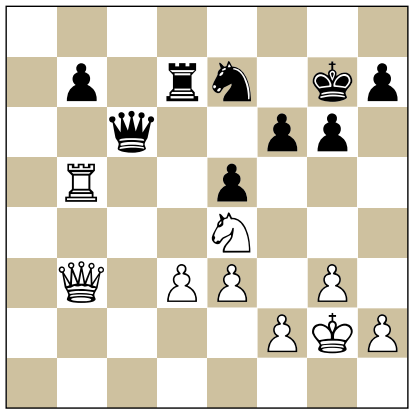
Malakhov-Nepomniachtchi (Round 5)
position after 32.♖xd6

Ian Nepomniachtchi saved this position against the top endgame player Malakhov.



Yakovenko-Nepomniachtchi (Round 8)
position after 28.♕h4

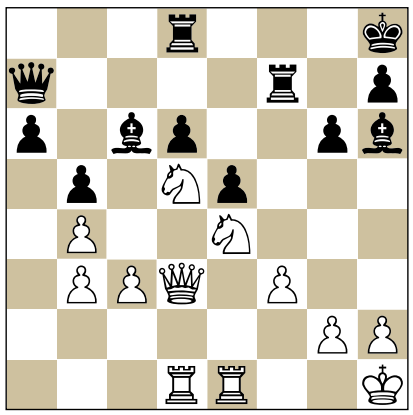
This position was against the very dangerous Yakovenko.



Grischuk-Nepomniachtchi (Round 10)
position after 36...♕c6

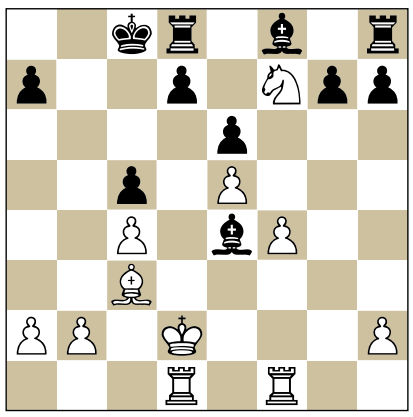
This was against Grischuk, one of the strongest players in the world.

And finally, two black games from his tiebreak against Karjakin.



Karjakin-Nepomniachtchi (Playoff 1)
position after 28.b3

Ian didn't lose this rapid game.



Karjakin-Nepomniachtchi (Playoff 3)
position after 19.♔xd2

Or this blitz game!

If you manage to score 50 percent in five games against opponents of *this* level it's ridiculous to talk about luck. In my view this is about the ability to extract the maximum from any position, even the vilest one, and that's as valuable a trait for a chess player as, for example, his opening armour.

Ian's path to top-level chess hasn't been strewn with roses. He has turned down coaches, and coaches have turned him down. He has risen high and immediately fallen painfully. He has failed to control his nerves too many times, and, being unbelievably talented, has lost to stubborn and disciplined mediocrities. In some of the interviews that he gave last year Nepomniachtchi said that he had got over a superiority complex from which he had suffered since childhood, from his very first and so impressive successes. The appearance of this complex was my dubious contribution. Almost eight years ago I published a long article in the newspaper *Sovietsky Sport* about the 12-year-old boy who had just missed becoming under-18 champion of Russia, but was left a hair's breadth from the title after losing a humiliating game in the last round to a future (as we now know) participant in the 2010 Super Final, Igor Kurnosov.

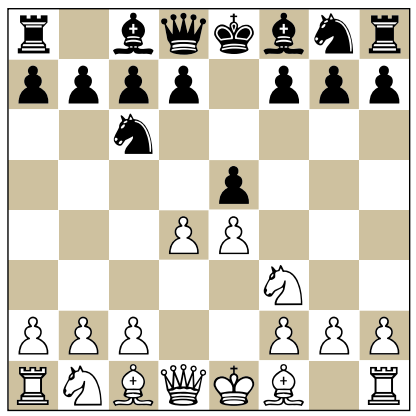
Playing the tape of my memories, I see a sobbing 12-year-old child who can't be comforted either by his mother or by his first coach, and I see the very young and awkward 17-year-old winner of the 2008 Aeroflot Open beaming with pride. I see him growing into a computer addict who channels the energy of his chess losses into shooting at space monsters. And I see a young man who at a good moment quotes some lesser-known lines by the poet Osip Mandelstam (who, as we know, was sent by the Bolsheviks to rot in a typhus camp near Vladivostok in 1938). I'm deliberately choosing the elements of a mosaic from which the image of Russian champion Ian Nepomniachtchi is forming in my mind, a complex, interesting, deep and strong person, whom I have presented to readers of New In Chess as best I can. A brilliant child who has finally grown up and learned to handle his chess gift.

P.S. Reading this article before sending it to the editor I realized that I hadn't said a word about the performance of the now ex-champion of Russia Alexander Grischuk. This was unfair, as Grischuk ended up being the only player in the Super Final who didn't lose a single game, but at the same time only won two. As a result Alexander came third, overtaking Svidler on the coefficient. If Grischuk had scored half a point more the table would have looked different. But still, I won't apologize to readers, because the main event that occurred with Grischuk at the end of December had nothing to do with the Super Final of the Russian Championship. The most important thing was that Carlsen refused to play in the Candidates' matches, and now Alexander has been included in the World Championship cycle that will take place in May of this year in Kazan. Which means we'll have a reason to write about him in detail again...

NOTES BY
Ian Nepomniachtchi

SO 4.4 – C45
Ian Nepomniachtchi
Peter Svidler
Moscow 2010 (9)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4



One of the soundest ways of avoiding the Berlin endgame. Peter supposedly does not play it, but, as they say, God helps those who help themselves.

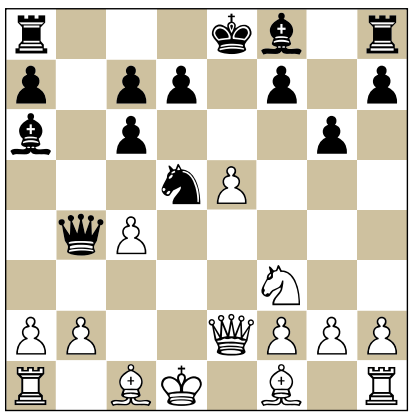
3...exd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6

About an hour and a half before the start of the round I had the bright idea of looking at the games in an online database, and, of course, I received some highly unpleasant news: this year against Howell my opponent made this move, rather than 4...♗c5, which Peter had often employed previously, and so at virtually the last minute my preparations had to begin anew.

5.♘xc6 bxc6 6.e5 ♕e7 7.♕e2 ♘d5 8.c4 ♗a6 9.♘d2 g6

The afore-mentioned game went 9...0-0-0 10.b3 d6, with unclear play.

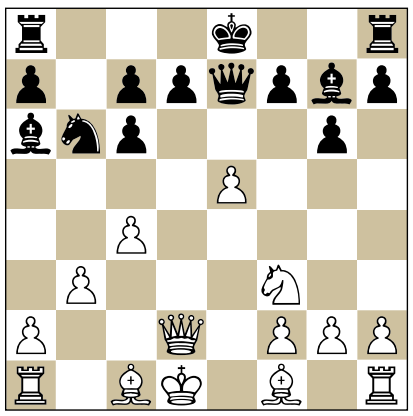
10.♘f3 ♕b4+ 11.♔d1



11...♘b6

The last time that this human move occurred was in a game between two 'engines'. But in games between flesh and blood players (for example, Ponomariov-Leko and Radjabov-Aronian) Black played in computer style – 11...♖b8 – and more or less coped with his opening problems.

12.b3 ♗g7 13.♕d2 ♕e7



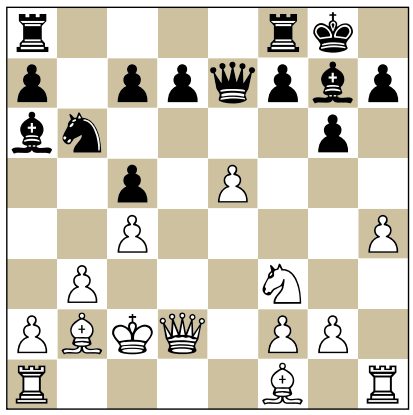
Moscow 2010 — **cat. IXX**

			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12		TPR
1	Sergey Karjakin	IGM RUS 2760	*	1	½	½	0	½	½	½	1	1	½	1	7	2803
2	Ian Nepomniachtchi	IGM RUS 2720	0	*	½	1	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	7	2807
3	Alexander Grischuk	IGM RUS 2771	½	½	*	½	1	1	½	½	½	½	½	½	6½	2765
4	Peter Svidler	IGM RUS 2722	½	0	½	*	1	½	½	½	1	½	1	½	6½	2770
5	Vladimir Malakhov	IGM RUS 2712	1	½	0	0	*	1	½	½	½	½	½	½	5½	2706
6	Nikita Vitiugov	IGM RUS 2709	½	½	0	½	0	*	½	½	½	½	1	1	5½	2706
7	Vladimir Potkin	IGM RUS 2646	½	½	½	½	½	½	*	½	½	0	½	½	5	2676
8	Dmitry Yakovenko	IGM RUS 2726	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	*	0	½	½	½	5	2669
9	Igor Kurnosov	IGM RUS 2676	0	½	½	0	½	½	½	1	*	½	½	½	5	2673
10	Evgeny Tomashevsky	IGM RUS 2699	0	0	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	*	½	½	5	2671
11	Denis Khismatullin	IGM RUS 2659	½	0	½	0	½	0	½	½	½	½	*	½	4	2609
12	Vadim Zviagintsev	IGM RUS 2676	0	0	½	½	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	*	4	2607

14.♗b2

White must mobilize all his forces as quickly as possible. For the moment, 'active' ideas do not work, for example: 14.♕a5 ♗b7 15.♗a3 c5!? (the quiet 15...d6 is in no way worse) 16.♕xc5 d6 17.♕e3 (17.♕b5+ c6 18.♕a5 c5 19.♔c2 0-0 20.♖e1 ♖fd8, with initiative) 17...0-0, and White barely manages to achieve equality.

14...0-0 15.♔c2 c5 16.h4



16...d5

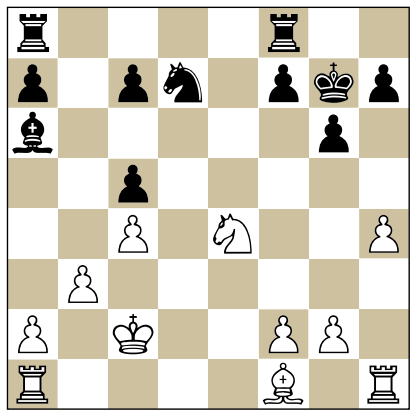
This exchanging operation looks under-prepared, but after 16...♗b7 17.♗d3 a5 18.a4 White's firepower directed at the opponent's kingside looks very threatening.

17.exd6 ♕xd6 18.♗xg7 ♕xd2+ 19.♘xd2 ♔xg7 20.♘e4

Generally speaking, of course, Black is somewhat worse, but White has to act with determination: the opponent is about to consolidate his forces, take away a number of important squares from the knight, and fully equalize.

The knight is not too well placed at d2, and since f7-f5 or ♗b7 is threatened, White wants to switch it to a more promising position with gain of tempo.

20...♘d7



21.♖d1?!

There was absolutely no hurry for this logical move. Most probably White should first have got rid of a potential weakness and at the same time activated his rook on h1 by playing 21.h5, and only then concerned himself with the fate of its colleague.

21...♗b7 22.♘c3 ♘f6

22...♘e5 is risky: 23.♘a4 ♘g4 24.♖d2 ♖ad8 25.♖e2 ♗e4+!? 26.♔c3 ♗d3 27.♖b2 ♗f5 28.♘xc5 ♖d1 29.g3 ♖c1+ 30.♔b4 ♖b8+ 31.♔a3 ♘e5 32.f4 (32.♗g2? ♖xc4!) 32...♘d3 33.♘xd3 ♗xd3 34.♖f2, and White has good chances of converting his extra pawn.

23.f3 ♖fe8 24.♗d3 ♗c6 25.♖he1 a5?!

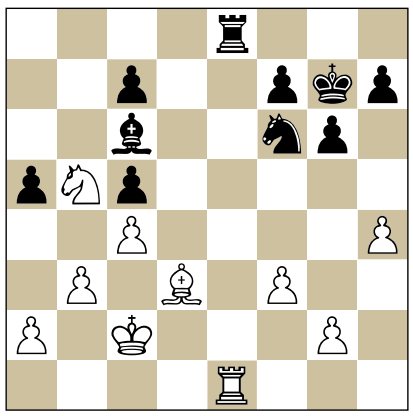
A careless move. Of course, Black is still a long way from making a deci-

sive mistake, but it was not essential to create something for the white king to latch on to. It was sufficient to play 25...a6, and it would not have been easy for White to find a satisfactory plan to play for a win.

26.♘b5 ♖xe1

26...a4 would have granted White an outside passed pawn and, despite weighty tactical arguments, it can hardly be the correct decision.

27.♖xe1 ♖e8!

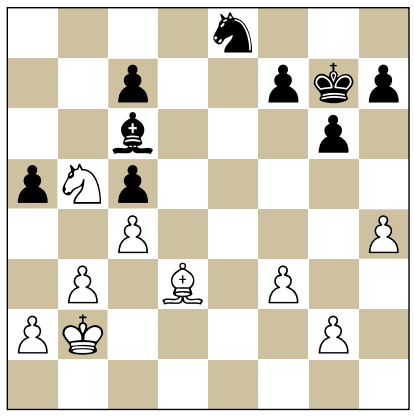


Here I had a long and melancholy think. After the exchange of all the rooks the vulnerability of my structure on the kingside will certainly tell, and I had not the slightest desire to take part in a pawn race. I have to say that I found it hard to believe in what had happened: after a series of logical and strong moves, White, to all appearances, no longer has any advantage. At any event, I decided to skirt the edge of the board, waiting in trepidation for my kingside to be reduced to smithereens.

28.♖xe8 ♘xe8

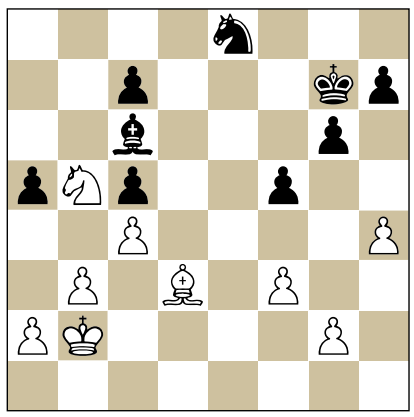
Ready! Steady! Go!

29.♔b2



29...♔h6?!

Peter immediately chooses the wrong route! After the accurate 29...f5! even a photo-finish would have been unable to determine the winner:

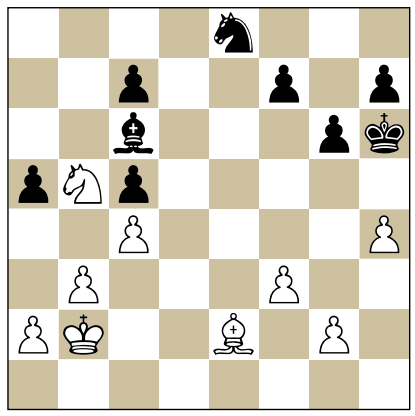


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

A) Inaccurate play may altogether cost White the game, for example: 30.h5 ♔h6 31.hxg6 hxg6 32.♔a3 ♔g5 33.♔a4 ♔f4 34.♔xa5 ♔g3 35.♘xc7 ♘xc7 36.♔b6 ♗a8 37.♔xc7 ♔xg2 38.♗e2 f4 39.a4 g5 40.♔b8 ♔f2 and Black wins. Of course, this variation can be called a cooperative one, but it illustrates quite well how strong Black's counterplay is;

B) 30.♔a3 ♔h6 31.♔a4 ♔h5 32.♔xa5 ♔xh4 33.♘xc7 ♘xc7 34.♔b6 ♗a8 35.♔xc7 ♔g3, and White is forced to repeat moves: 36.♔b8 ♗c6 37.♔c7 ♗a8 38.♔b8.

30.♗e2



30...♘g7?

Another step in the wrong direction. Now, to all appearances, the game can no longer be saved. Correct was 30...f5 31.g3 g5 32.hxg5+ ♔xg5 33.f4+ ♔g6 34.♘c3 ♘f6 35.♘d1, and White retains slight winning chances.

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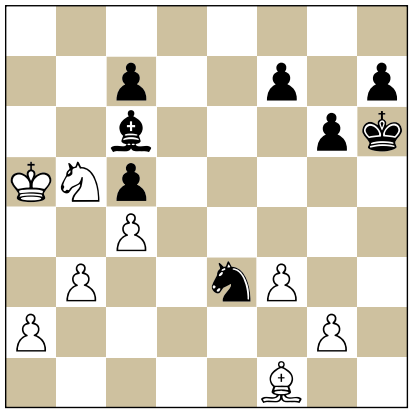
31.♔a3 ♘f5

Peter had available an interesting chance, but one insufficient to save the game: 31...♔h5 32.g3 ♘f5!? 33.f4+! (only not 33.g4+? ♔xh4 34.gxf5 ♔g3 35.fxg6 fxg6, and Black is not in danger of losing) 33...♔h6 34.♔a4 ♘xg3 35.♗d1 ♗xb5+ 36.♔xb5 or 36.cxb5 with a probable win.

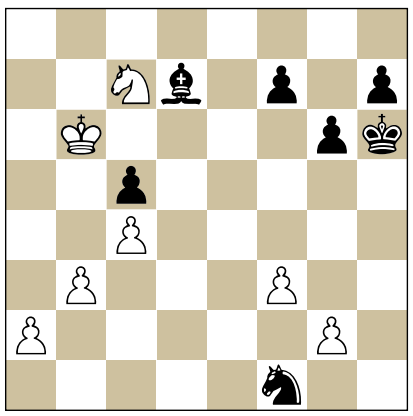
32.♔a4 ♘xh4 33.♗f1 ♘f5 34.♔xa5 ♘e3



35.♘xc7!

This simple sacrifice by the white player was far-sightedly calculated when he encountered the unexpected 30...♘g7.

35...♘xf1 36.♔b6 ♗d7



37.♘d5

From the mathematical point of view 37.♔xc5 was stronger and simpler, but the move in the game denies Black any counterchances.

37...♔g7

37...♘d2 is more resilient, but here too after 38.♔xc5 ♔g5 39.♔d6 White wins, so to speak, with something in reserve.

38.a4 ♗c8 39.♘e7

Black resigned.

NOTES BY
Sergey Karjakin

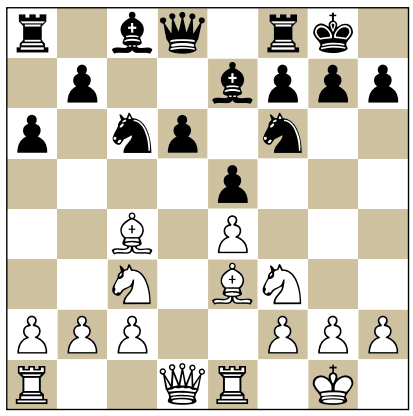
SI 14.8 – B90
Sergey Karjakin
Ian Nepomniachtchi
Moscow 2010 (3)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗e3 e5 7.♘f3

Previously this move was regarded as a sideline, but now it is hardly any less popular than the main move 7.♘b3.

7...♗e7 8.♗c4 0-0 9.0-0 ♘c6 10.♖e1

This position has occurred twice in my games. In 2007 I managed to beat Van Wely, and in 2008 I only just saved myself against Nakamura.



10...♗e6

This move looks less accurate than 10...b5, as had been played against me before, and as Ian chose later in the play-off.

11.♘d5 b5 12.♗b3

Playing by analogy and transposing into the 10...b5 11.♗b3 variation.

White also had other possibilities. For example, even in the event of the simplest continuation 12.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 13.♗xe6 fxe6 14.a4 his position is preferable. 12.♗f1 is also interesting, as Movsesian played against Ian (Russian Team Championship, Sochi 2008).

12...♗xd5

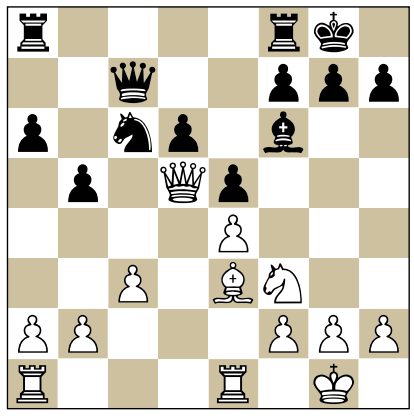
By playing this, Black agrees to a slightly inferior position, but it is not easy to recommend anything instead. For example, if 12...♘xe4 the unexpected 13.a4! is strong, when the black pieces are 'hanging'.

13.♗xd5 ♕c7 14.c3

The simplest. But 14.c4!? bxc4 15.♗xc4 ♘xe4 16.♖c1 ♘f6 17.♗g5 was also interesting, with the initiative.

14...♘xd5 15.♕xd5 ♗f6

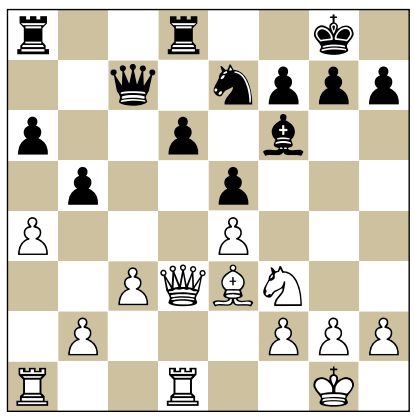
Preparing ...♘e7.



16.♖ed1

16.a4! ♘e7 17.♕d3 ♕c6 18.axb5 axb5 19.♖xa8 ♖xa8 20.♖d1 was more accurate, obtaining a position from the game, but with Black to move! Which, however, does not affect the evaluation of the position as somewhat better for White.

16...♖fd8 17.a4 ♘e7 18.♕d3



18...♕c6?

Careless! Meanwhile, I did not see what to do after 18...bxa4 19.♖xa4 d5 when Black is close to full equality.

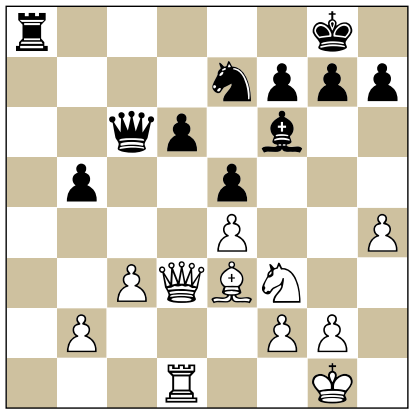
19.axb5 axb5 20.♖xa8 ♖xa8

20...♕xa8 was not much better: 21.♗b6 ♖f8 22.♗c7 ♘c8 23.♕xb5 ♕xe4 24.♘d2 ♕c2 25.♕b3 ♕xb3 26.♘xb3 ♖e8 27.♘a5 and in the endgame White retains the advantage.

21.h4

I was carried away by the idea in the game, but 21.♘e1! was possibly

stronger, followed by ♘c2 and ♘b4 with an obvious advantage for White.



21...h6

If 21...h5 there could have followed 22.♕xd6 ♕xe4 23.♗g5 ♘f5 24.♕d5 ♕xd5 25.♖xd5 ♗xg5 26.hxg5 f6 27.♖xb5 with an advantage in the endgame.

22.♗g5!? hxg5 23.hxg5 ♖d8

Relatively better was 23...♗xg5 24.♘xg5 f6 (24...♖a6 25.♕h3↑) 25.♘e6 ♔f7 26.♕xd6 ♕xd6 27.♖xd6 ♘c8 28.♘d8+ ♔e7 29.♖d2, when White retains winning chances.

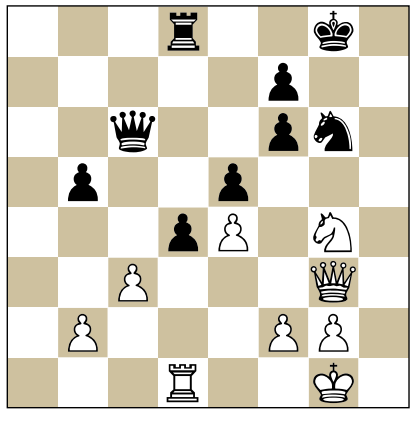
24.gxf6 gxf6

But now Black's pawn structure resembles a ruin.

25.♘h2 d5 26.♘g4

26.♘f1 was also very strong, followed by ♘g3 or ♘e3 according to circumstances, with a big advantage.

26...d4 27.♕g3 ♘g6



28.♕f3

28.♘h6+! ♔f8 29.♕f3 was more accurate, when White dominates.

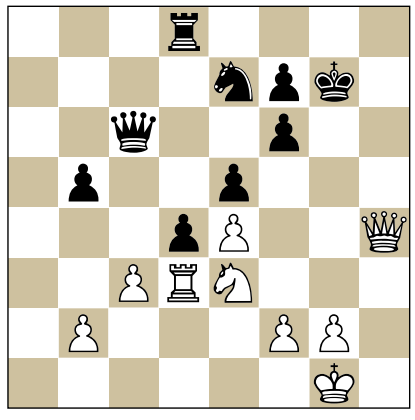
28...♔g7

Now Black somehow sets up a defence.

29.♘e3 ♘e7 30.♕g4+ ♔f8

31.♕h4 ♔g7 32.♖d3

Bringing up the rook into the battle.



32...♕b6

Defending the rook and preparing ...dxe3. The computer recommends 32...b4, after which the only way of maintaining the initiative is 33.♖d1!! bxc3 34.bxc3 with a slight advantage for White.

33.cxd4 exd4 34.♕g4+

34.e5 would have led to a forced draw after 34...dxe3 35.♖xd8 exf2+ 36.♔f1 ♕xd8 37.exf6+ ♔g6 (37...♔f8?? 38.fxe7+ ♕xe7 39.♕h8 mate) 38.fxe7

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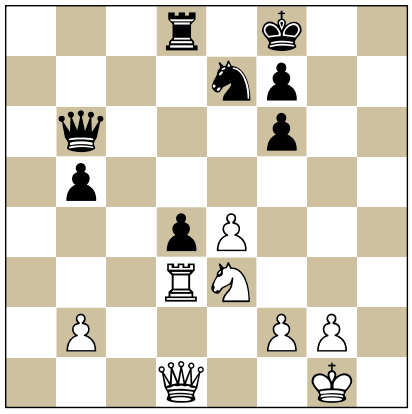
♕d3+ 39.♔xf2 ♕d2+ 40.♔g1 ♕e3+ 41.♔h2 f6.

34...♔f8 35.♕d1

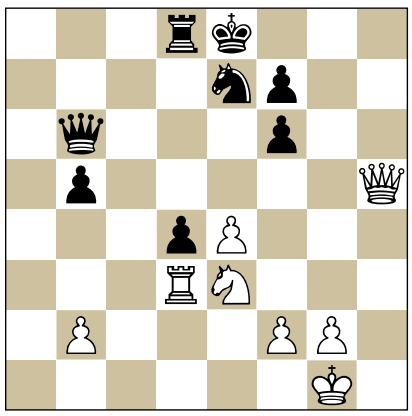
The key position. Up till now Ian has defended quite well, but here he commits a possibly decisive mistake.



35...♔e8

In threatening to capture the knight, Ian overlooked White's reply. After the game Ian and I thought that Black should have played 35...♖d6 with the threat of ...dxe3 ♖xd6 e2!. However, after the simple 36.♘f1 followed by ♘g3 White retains an unpleasant initiative. The most accurate move was 35...♕c5, when White is a little better, but there is still all to play for.

36.♕h5!



36...♖d6

It transpires that 36...dxe3 loses to 37.♕h8+ ♘g8 38.♕xg8+ ♔e7 39.♖xd8 (but not 39.♕xd8+?? ♕xd8 40.♖xd8 e2, and Black wins) 39...exf2+ 40.♔f1 ♕xd8 41.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 42.♔xf2 ♔d7 43.♔e3 ♔d6 44.♔d4 ♔c6 45.b4 ♔d6 46.g4 ♔c6 47.e5.

37.♕h8+ ♔d7 38.♘g4

Now the attack develops of its own accord and White's threats are irresistible.

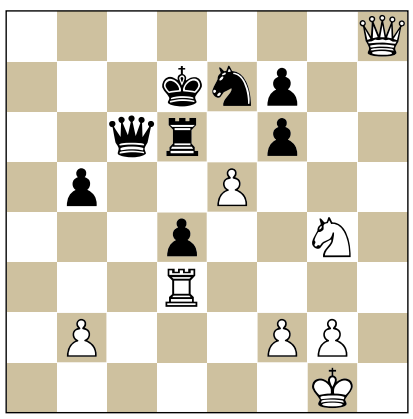
BORIS DOLMATOVSKY

After the dust had settled and Sergey Karjakin had lost the championship and Ian Nepomniachtchi had won it, the two protagonists told their stories to the press.

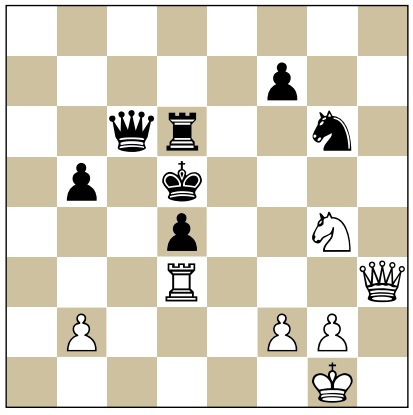
(Middle) Sergey Karjakin didn't have to tell his wife how he felt after he had been so close.

(Below) The new Russian champion had the feeling that Isaac Babel described so brilliantly written all over his face.

38...♕c6 39.e5
The most direct, but 39.♖a3 was also strong.



39...♘g6?
The last chance was 39...♕c1+ 40.♔h2 fxe5 41.♕xe5, but even here White wins a pawn while maintaining his attack.
40.♘xf6+ ♔e6 41.♕h3+ ♔xe5 42.♘g4+ ♔d5
42...♔e6 43.♘h6+ ♔d5 44.♕e3! does not leave Black any saving chances.

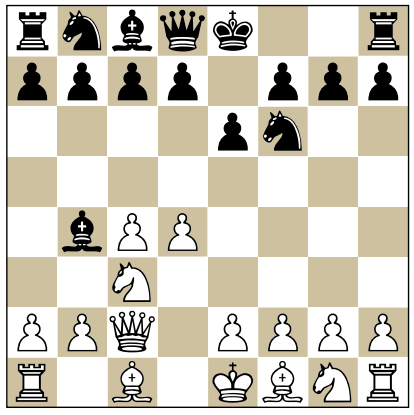


43.♖d1!
The last difficult move in the game. Now the black king is under a crossfire and there is no longer any defence.
43...♕e8 Or 43...♖e6 44.♘e3+.
44.♕f3+ ♕e4 45.♕xf7+ ♕e6 46.♘e3+ ♔e5 47.♘g4+
The position is one of those where 'everything wins', but even so 47.♘c4+ bxc4 48.♖e1+ ♔d5 49.♕b7+ ♔c5 50.b4+ cxb3 51.♖c1+ ♕c4 52.♕c7+ ♖c6 53.♖xc4+ ♔xc4 54.♕xc6+ would have been slightly prettier.
47...♔d5 48.♕b7+ ♔c4
If 48...♖c6 49.♘e3+ ♔e4 50.♕xb5.
49.♖c1+
And in view of the variation 49...♔b4 50.♕a7 Black resigned.

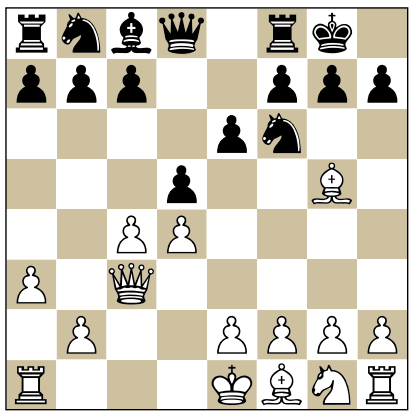
NOTES BY
Vladimir Malakhov

NI 20.3 – E32
Vladimir Malakhov
Sergey Karjakin
Moscow 2010 (11)

This game was played in the last round of the Russian Championship Super Final. My opponent was clear first before this round, half a point ahead of Ian Nepomniachtchi and definitely in great shape. I realized that I was going to play against one of the world's top players, and a draw was OK in this game. But it was my last chance to get back to 50 per cent in the tournament, and I had some idea in the opening. So I decided to go for a big fight if a certain position occurred.
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♕c2



4...0-0
I was happy to see this move. Sergey has also played 4...d5, and I felt that I was behind in preparation in some sharp lines like 5.cxd5 exd5 6.♗g5. So, most probably I would have played 5.a3 ♗xc3+ 6.♕xc3 ♘e4 7.♕c2 c5 8.dxc5 ♘c6 9.e3 ♕a5+, like in Eljanov-Kramnik, Tal Memorial 2010, when the position is completely equal.
5.a3 ♗xc3+ 6.♕xc3 d5
A very popular line in which Black seems to be OK. For example, Sergey himself won an important game against Nikita Vitiugov in the World Cup 2009.
7.♗g5
At top-level chess this move is comparatively rare. After 7.cxd5 ♘e4! the position is very complicated, but generally Black feels fine, so lately the main move here is 7.♘f3, when after 7...dxc4 8.♕xc4 b6 9.♗g5 ♗a6 Black doesn't have problems equalizing. I was sure that Sergey knew very well what to do in this line.



7...c5
A bit risky, but in my opinion the best move. Here 7...dxc4 is less good, because after 8.♕xc4 b6 9.♖d1! ♗a6 10.♕c2 ♘bd7 11.e4 ♗xf1 12.♔xf1 ♕c8 13.♘e2 c5 14.f3 White has a very pleasant position. In Dreev-Bartel, European Club Cup, Plovdiv 2010, after 14...cxd4 15.♘xd4 ♕xc2 16.♘xc2 Black failed to equalize and finally lost. Of course, with precise play Black can hold the draw, but it is a really boring defence, while after 7...c5 all three results are possible.
8.dxc5 d4 9.♕c2
Another move is 9.♕g3, played by Morozevich against Grischuk and Karpov in the World Blitz Championship 2009. Also with very complicated positions, where both sides have their chances. Here Sergey sank into thought, and I realized that he was almost out of his preparation, while I remembered the more or less main lines. Good news!
9...e5 10.e3
This is a new move. White tried 10.e4 (Dreev-Wojtaszek, European Individual Championship, Budva 2009), but I don't like this set-up – the pawn on d4 becomes very strong.
Interesting as well is 10.♘f3. The game Morozevich-Anand, Nice Amber Rapid 2009, continued 10...♖e8 11.e3

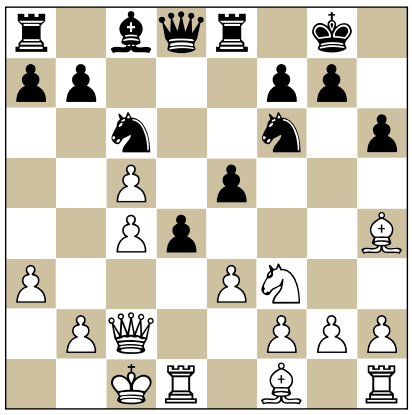
h6 12.♗xf6 ♕xf6 13.♗d3 ♘d7 14.0-0 ♘xc5 15.exd4 exd4, with a complicated but close to equal position.

10...h6 11.♗h4 ♖e8

After the game Sergey told me that he had forgotten the right move order here and should have played 11...♕e7. He probably remembered Anand's game, where Black played 11...♖e8 after 11.♘f3. Anyway, I think 11...♖e8 is not bad. After 11...♕e7 White has many possibilities, for example 12.0-0-0 dxe3 13.fxe3 ♕xc5 14.♗xf6 ♕xe3+ 15.♔b1 gxf6 16.♗d3, with good compensation for the pawn, or 12.exd4 exd4+ 13.♗e2, with a very complicated position.

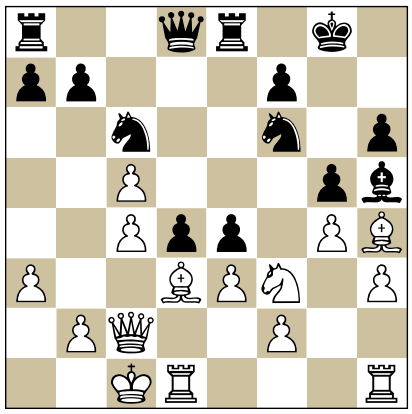
The line is very rare, which is why it is difficult to give the exact evaluation.

12.0-0-0 ♘c6 13.♘f3



13...b6?!

Now White is just a pawn up. Of course, Black has certain compensation, but White is better anyway. Better is 13...♗g4. For example, the following crazy line could happen: 14.h3 ♗h5 15.♗d3 g5 16.g4! e4!



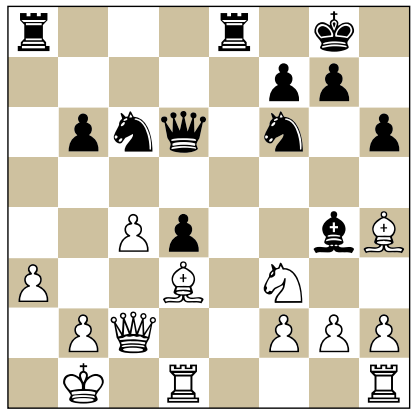
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

Very easy to find with a computer, but how could Sergey go to this line without checking it against a well-prepared opponent (for my first 12 moves I maybe spent one or two minutes)? Here, after 17.gxh5 exf3 18.♗g3 dxe3 19.♗h7+ (19.♗g6 is also very interesting) 19...♘xh7 20.♖xd8 ♖axd8 21.fxe3 ♖xe3 22.♖d1, Black must have enough compensation for the queen, and the most likely result is draw.

14.exd4 exd4 15.cxb6 axb6 16.♗d3 ♕d6!

Getting away from the pin. White's task is still very difficult.

17.♔b1 ♗g4



BORIS DOLMATOVSKY

Five-time Russian champion Peter Svidler had a brilliant start, but lacked the strength for an equally aggressive finish.

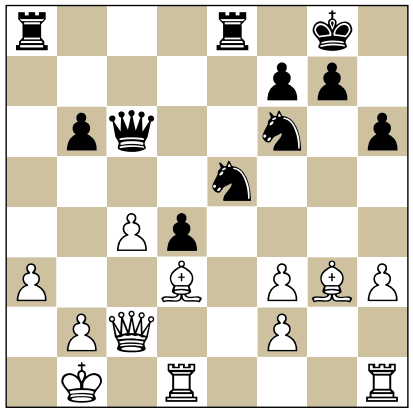
On the last day Vladimir Malakhov dramatically changed the course of the championship when he tripped up the leading Sergey Karjakin.

NEW IN CHESS

18.h3?!

Too slow. I should have played 18.♗g3 ♕d7 19.♖he1, keeping the advantage. I thought that getting the second bishop and opening the g-line was good for White, but I have no time to exploit it.

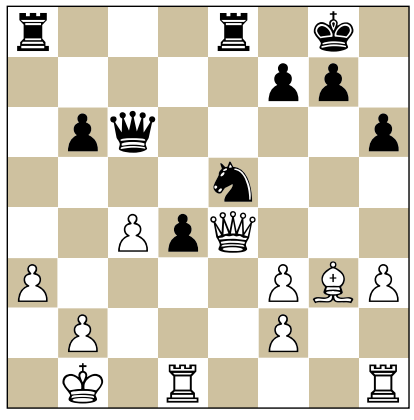
18...♗xf3 19.gxf3 ♘e5 20.♗g3 ♕c6!



21.♗e4!

A good decision, intended to simplify the position. I also thought about 21.♗xe5 ♖xe5 22.f4, but after 22...♖ee8 (22...♖e7!?) 23.♖hg1 ♕f3 I was not sure at all if I was still better or already worse. I saw the right continuation for Sergey after the move I played, when I only have a small edge in the endgame, but at least I am running no risks here.

21...♘xe4 22.♕xe4

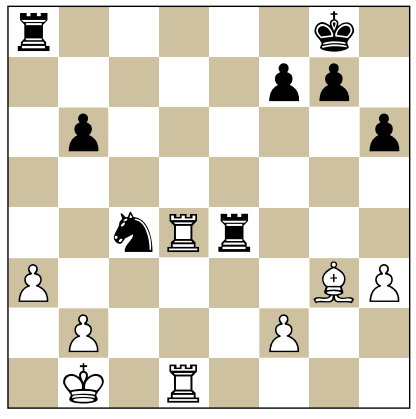


22...♕xe4+?

This is the decisive mistake. Now White must win the endgame.

I couldn't believe my eyes, but 22...♕xc4! would have worked. It's only a draw after 23.♗xe5 ♖xa3! 24.bxa3 ♕b3+ 25.♔c1 ♕xa3+, and now 26.♔d2? ♕c3+ 27.♔e2 ♖xe5! 28.♕xe5 d3+ is bad, as Black is already playing for a win. So I had to play 23.♖xd4 ♘xf3! and now, for example, 24.♕xe8+ ♖xe8 25.♖xc4 ♘d2+ 26.♔c2 ♘xc4. White's rook is still on h1, and Black is ready to start counterplay with ...g5, ...f5 etc. Of course, White is still better, but I think that here Black has much more drawing chances (and, in my opinion, quite good ones!) than in the game.

23.fxe4 ♘xc4 24.♖xd4 ♖xe4 25.♖hd1!



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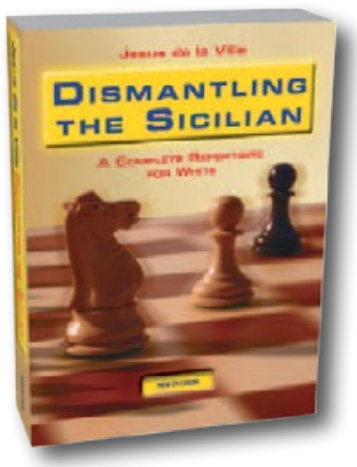

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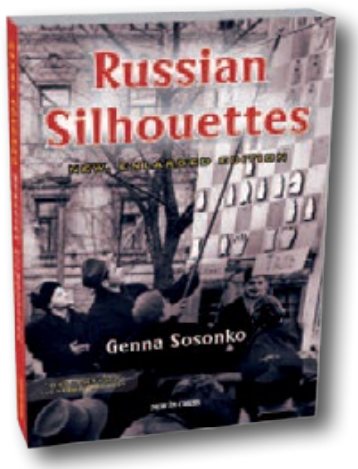

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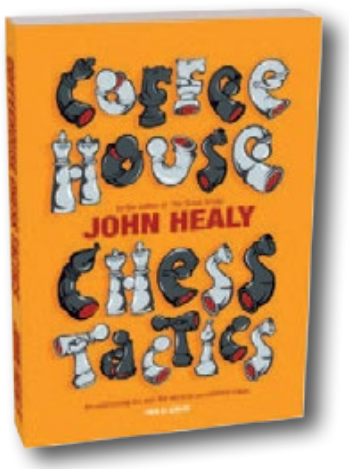
Ian Rogers,
The Sun Herald



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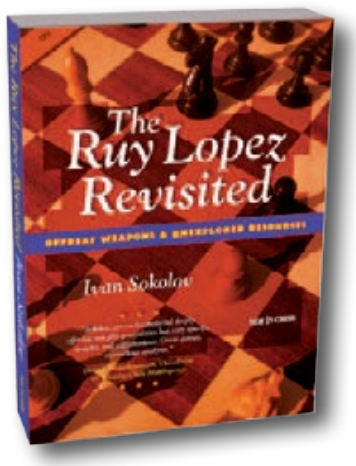

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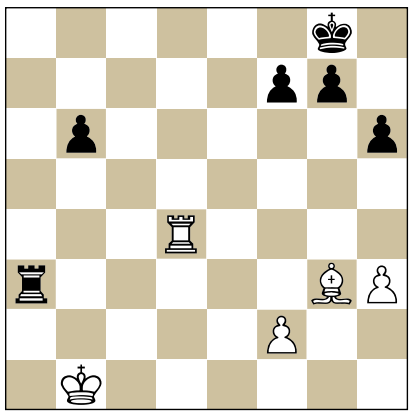
And here came a very difficult choice for Sergey. After 25...♖ae8 26.a4 White's queenside pawns are very strong, and Black can lose very fast, for example 26...g5 27.b3 ♘a5 28.♖xe4 ♖xe4 29.♔b2 f5 30.♗c7. So he decided to sacrifice a knight, with some hopes of either building a fortress or exchanging all pawns and reach a drawn position with rook + bishop versus rook. But in my opinion both these goals are unachievable, provided White doesn't make any big mistakes.

25...♖xd4 26.♖xd4 ♘xa3+!? 27.bxa3 ♖xa3



28.h4!

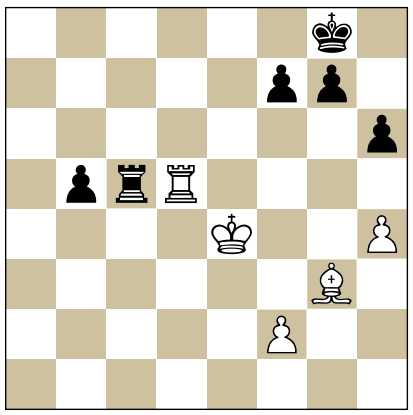
It is important to avoid counterplay on the kingside.

Much worse is 28.♖b4?! g5 29.♖xb6 f5! 30.♖xh6 ♔g7, and Black survives.

28...♖f3

After 28...g5 29.♖d6 White's task is even easier.

29.♔c2 ♖f5 30.♔d3 b5 31.♔e4 ♖c5 32.♖d5!



32...♖c4+

Exchanging the rooks is impossible here: after 32...♖xd5 33.♔xd5 ♔h7 34.♔c5 ♔g6 35.♔xb5 ♔f5 36.f3 g5 37.♔c4 gxh4 38.♗h2 or 37...g4 38.♔d3 gxf3 39.♔e3 White wins.

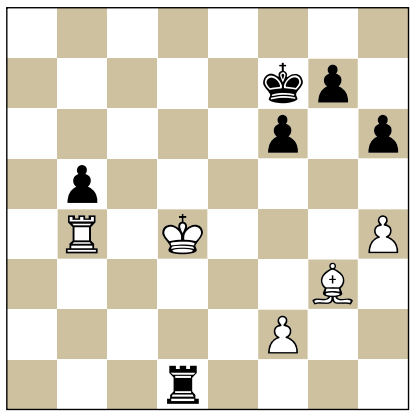
33.♔d3 ♖b4 34.♔c3 ♖b1 35.♔c2 ♖b4 36.♖f5 f6 37.♔c3

It's too early for 37.h5?!, because I am not sure if White wins after 37...♖g4! 38.♗f4 b4 39.♗d2 ♔f7 40.♔b3 ♖g2! 41.♗e3 ♖g4.

37...♖b1 38.♖f4 ♔f7 39.♖b4

I was a bit afraid that there could be some forced draw after the rook exchange here, but it seems that White wins. I calculated the line 39...♖xb4 40.♔xb4 ♔e6 41.♔xb5 ♔d5 42.h5! ♔e4 43.♔c6 ♔f3 44.♔d5 ♔g4 45.♔e6 ♔xh5 46.♔f5, and the game is over. Other possibilities don't work either, so Black has to keep the rooks and give up the b-pawn.

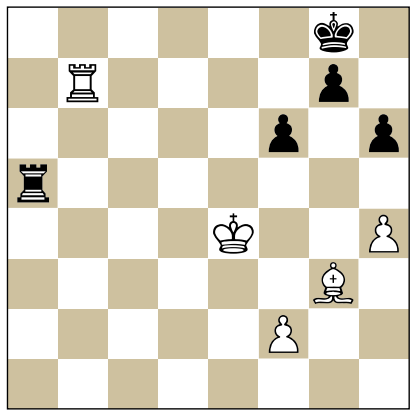
39...♖c1+ 40.♔d4 ♖d1+



41.♔e4

The principal question here was which structure Black should keep – with the pawn on h6 or on h5. In my opinion, the second option was slightly better, so here he should probably have played 41...h5 42.♖xb5 ♔g6. But I think it is lost for Black anyway. I move my king to the kingside, protecting the h4 pawn, and then I move my rook to c7 and my bishop to c5, threatening ♗f8. If Black keeps the king on g8, then at some point I will attack the h5 pawn with the rook and take it. If Black keeps his king on h7 and protects the f8-square with the rook, I move my king to e6, push the pawn to f5, put the king on f7 and win just like as in the game, attacking the g7 pawn. Anyway, with his pawn on h5 Black has more space and more chances of survival. Sergey decided not to play h6-h5.

41...♖a1 42.♖xb5 ♖a4+ 43.♔d5 ♖a6 44.♖b7+ ♔g8 45.♔e4 ♖a5



46.♖d7!

Now White is ready to play h5 soon. 46...h5 is bad because of 47.♖d5.

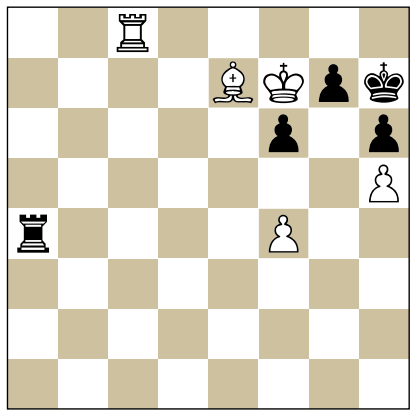
46...♔h7 47.♖d5 ♖a4+ 48.♔f3 ♔g6 49.h5+!

The rest is easy. White, after all necessary preparations, moves his king to f7, and Black can't prevent it. At the time the white king approaches f7, so Black can resign.

49...♔f7 50.♖d7+ ♔g8 51.♗f4 ♔h7 52.♖c7 ♖a5 53.♔g4 ♖a2 54.♗e3 ♖a4+ 55.f4 ♖a1 56.♗d4 ♖a6 57.♗c5 ♔g8 58.♔f5 ♖a2 59.♖c8+ ♔h7 60.♗f8! ♔g8 61.♗e7+ ♔h7

Or 61...♔f7 62.♗c5, and wins.

62.♔e6 ♖a4 63.♔f7



63...♖a7

Black's last hope was 63...♖xf4 64.♖g8 ♖g4 65.♗xf6?? ♖g3, with a draw, but of course 65.♗f8 is easy and enough.

64.♖c2 ♖a4 65.♖g2 ♖xf4 66.♖xg7+ ♔h8 67.♖g6

Black resigned. ■

With his announced sabbatical drawing eerily close, **Loek van Wely** decided to make a last splash on the American circuit. This time his longing for fame and fortune took the Dutch grandmaster to Atlantic City and, during the final days of 2010, Las Vegas. Was it there that his US tour finally ended and his year of semi-retirement commenced? Not exactly. Loathe to part with his favourite game too abruptly King Loek started his sabbatical with a tournament win in Berkeley!

Warming up for a sabbatical

Loek van Wely: 'I must say that Atlantic City, and I guess this was because of the weather, reminded me a lot of Wijk aan Zee.'

BETSY DYNAKO

Stop 1
Sheraton, Atlantic City

As I had had the opportunity to play in the gambling capitals of Las Vegas and Reno on my American tour, I didn't want to miss my chance to go to Atlantic City. Here, in this rival gambling metropolis the first edition of the Atlantic City International was held, which hopefully will be followed by many more. In the advertisements for the event the romantic walks you can go for were highlighted, but I must say that the place, and I guess this was because of the weather, reminded me a lot of Wijk aan Zee. In Wijk aan Zee you can also take long 'romantic' walks on the beach, even if their main purpose is mostly to cool off after losing a game and to get back to your senses.

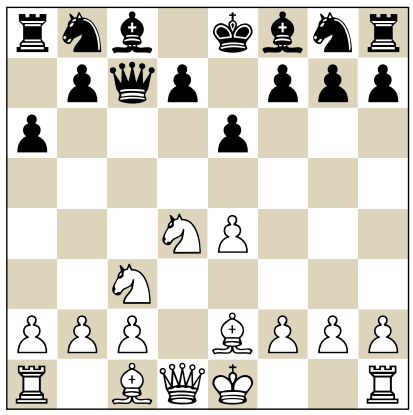
However, a better advertisement for the tournament was the fact that half the players got to go home with a nice paycheck! And now that we are talking about money, and saving money, and keeping our wives happy (read: keeping our wives busy so we can do whatever we like, be it poker, chess or whatever ☺) there was also an interesting shopping outlet nearby.

The tournament itself was pretty strong. In six games I played one untitled opponent, one IM and four 4 IGMs. The real money game was the one against Gata Kamsky in Round 4.

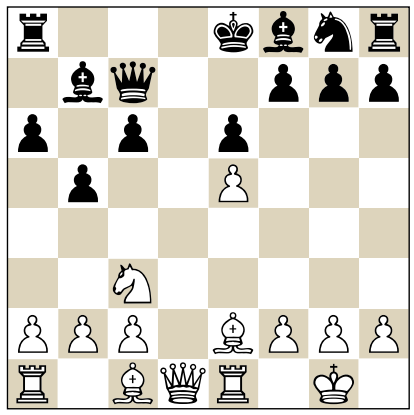
SI 41.12 – B43
Gata Kamsky
Loek van Wely
Atlantic City 2010 (4)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6?
After my most recent experiences in the Najdorf, especially the one vs Hikaru (Nakamura) in Amsterdam, I had put this opening in the fridge for a while, to let it cool off a bit... However, against Gata it would have been the right choice. Being principled is one thing, the ability to adapt to changed circumstances is another... Obviously, the correct move in this position was 2...d6!.
3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 a6 5.♘c3 ♕c7 6.♗e2

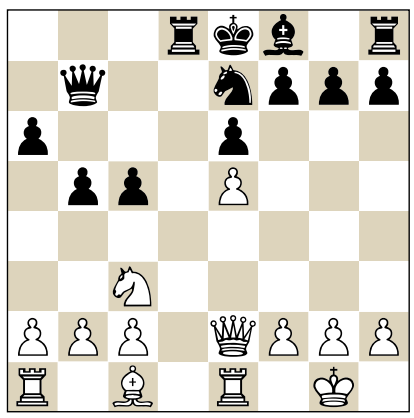
> '... and keeping our wives happy (read: keeping our wives busy so we can do whatever we like, be it poker, chess or whatever ☺)'



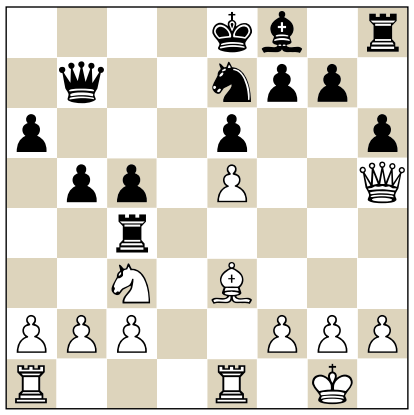
6...b5?! 6...d6 would have been my last chance to reach some kind of Scheveningen. That type of position I am at least familiar with.
7.0-0 ♗b7 8.♖e1 ♘c6 9.♘xc6 dxc6 10.e5



Great. So now we have reached a position in which I basically don't have a clue and my counterpart has a zillion years of experience. From now on, I am just trying to make sensible and sound moves, as you can see later on ☺.
10...c5 11.♗f3
After the game Gata was saying something about having forgotten his preparation and mumbling something about 11.♗d3. However, there is nothing wrong with the move he played.
11...♖d8 12.♕e2 ♘e7 13.♗xb7 ♕xb7



14.♗g5 I was more worried about 14.a4 and softening up my queenside rightaway: 14...b4 (14...♘f5 15. axb5 ♘d4 16.♕g4 axb5 17.♗g5 h5, and maybe I am holding but it's on the edge, for instance: 18.♕e4 ♕xe4 19. ♘xe4 ♘xc2 20.♗xd8 ♘xa1 21.♖xa1 ♔xd8 22.♘g5, and White is winning) 15.♘e4 ♘f5 16.♗g5.
14...h6 15.♕h5 ♖d4!
The beginning of my sequence of 'sensible' moves. Anyway, alternatives were hard to find.
16.♗e3 ♖c4



Going deeper into muddy waters. Normally speaking, this should be qualified as 'Don't try this at home'. But sometimes you are lucky and things work out well and people will call you brilliant!

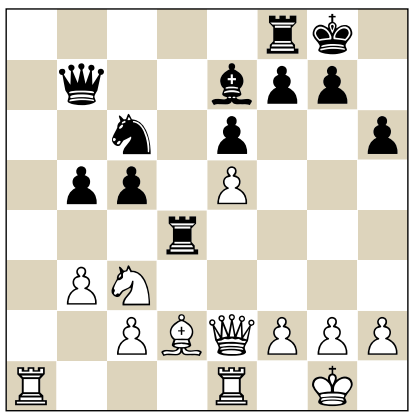
17.♕e2

Again 17.a4 was more to the point.

17...♘c6

After 17...♘f5 18.a4 ♗e7 19.axb5 axb5 20.♘xb5 ♕xb5 21.♖a8+ ♗d8 22.♖d1 0-0 23.♖dxd8 ♖xd8 24.♖xd8+ ♔h7 25.b3 White will be just a pawn up.

18.a4 ♗e7 19.axb5 axb5 20.♗d2 0-0 21.b3 ♖d4



With some small tactics Black has managed to complete his development.

22.♗e3

22.♘xb5 is punished by 22...♖xd2.

22...b4 23.♘a4

An interesting alternative was 23.♕a6!?.

23...♖e4 24.f4 ♘d4 25.♕f2 f6

I contemplated 25...g5 for a moment, but then I decided to stick with the more conventional 25...f6.

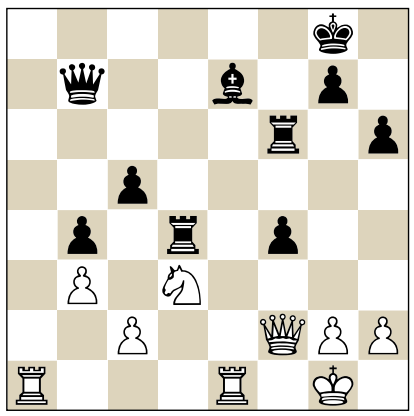
26.exf6

Alternatively, 26.♗xd4 ♖xd4 27.g3 ♖fd8 gives Black a nice initiative.

26...♖xf6 27.♘b2

27.g3 is met by 27...g5.

27...e5 28.♘d3 exf4 29.♗xd4 ♖xd4



30.♖e5

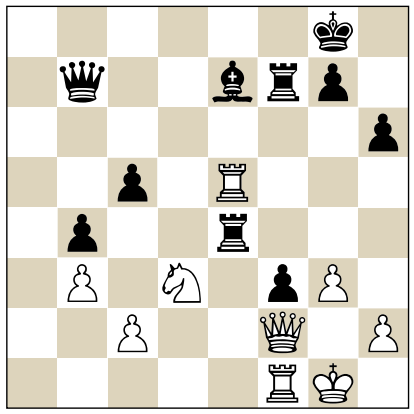
30.♕f3 would have been the more stubborn choice. However, I had no doubt I was going to win this. An endgame with a pawn up is always pleasant, and White's time situation started getting dramatic.

30...f3 31.g3 ♖f7

Too sophisticated. I was trying to be vague and avoid concrete play in Gata's time-trouble.

More to the point was 31...♗d6 32.♘xc5 ♕c6! 33.♕xd4 (or 33.♖e8+ ♕xe8 34.♕xd4 ♕e2) 33...f2+, and Black wins.

32.♖f1 ♖e4



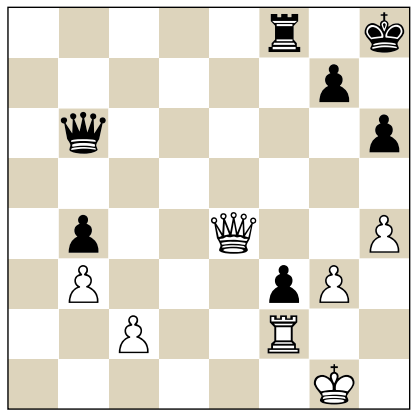
33.♘xc5! A good practical decision and the last try.

I had been expecting 33.♖xe4 ♕xe4 34.♘xc5 ♕c6, but with my dark-squared bishop still alive, I had no doubt about the outcome, e.g. 35.♘d3 ♗d8 36.♘e5 ♕b5 37.♘c4 ♗e7, and Black is winning.

33...♗xc5 34.♕xc5 ♖xe5

With your opponent down to less than a minute (no increment, no delay, nothing, nada!) it's sometimes hard to let your brain work well. However, 34...♖e2 35.♖xe2 fxe2 36.♖e1 ♕f3 wasn't that hard to find.

35.♕xe5 ♕b6+ 36.♖f2 ♖f8 37.♕e4 ♔h8 38.h4



Around here I had like 10 minutes left, while Gata was down to about 30 seconds. After some thinking I realized that the position is a dead draw.

'... what would my friend, the great German letter-writer Arkady Naiditsch do?'

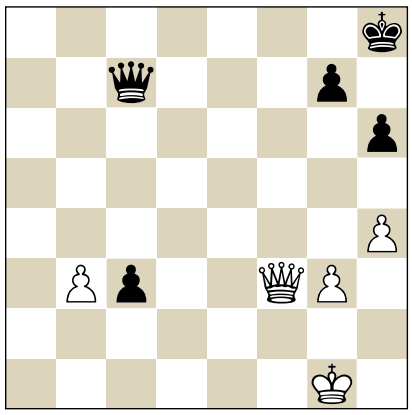
Then I started philosophizing for a few minutes, mainly asking myself what would be the appropiate thing to do in the land of unlimited possibilities? Then I realized that here, when you are f***ed, you are really sc****d. No job = no money = no food, no health insurance, you will die or you will be paying your last penny to cover medical bills. Just to double-check my ideas, I asked myself, what would my friend, the great German letter-writer, the merciless grandmas-

ter Arkady Naiditsch do if he were Black here against me? So I continued 'playing' ☺.

38...♕c5 39.♕d3 ♕a7 40.♕e4 ♕c5 41.♕d3 ♕b6 42.c3?!

Panic. 42.c4! was definitely stronger.

42...♕c7 43.♖xf3 ♖xf3 44.♕xf3 bxc3



And here I thought to be winning, although objectively it's still a draw. However, instead Gata overstepped the time-limit. After 45.♕a8+ ♔h7 46.♕e4+ g6 47.h5!! there is no way Black can win.

In the end Gata managed to crawl back in his usual style, relying on his strong character. His positions in the last two rounds looked awful and unwinnable, but following a tough defence he managed to outplay his opponents Paragua and Lenderman. As I drew my last two games against Lenderman and DeFirmian, Gata caught up with me and we shared first prize ($18,000 each).

Next Crime Scene: Bally's, Las Vegas

My next destination was Las Vegas, but first there was the unavoidable Christmas interruption. Once you have decided that Atlantic City and Las Vegas are on the menu, gambling the money of your family is more on your mind than spending time with them. Such a break also takes you out of your rhythm and gamblers hate that, especially when they start losing! As usual, your reporter is looking for cheap excuses, because in Las Vegas he had an especially hard time. First I got brutally mated by IM Mackenzie Molner (what's new, I hear you say), then I got challenged by a young 2100 player in the Botvinnik Variation of the Slav. They have no respect these days, these kids. During the game there was a point where I believed I was lost (even I can be pessimistic sometimes), but it wasn't that bad and I managed to sweat it out. In my next game, against a 2200 player, I was down an hour on the clock, with a draw as the best result to hope for, and again I somehow managed to do the impossible. However, the worst was still to come. Playing in round 5 against my friend IM Jake Kleiman, Elo around 2400, we had an interesting game, but after some complications we transferred to an endgame with queens, rooks and opposite-coloured bishops, in which I was a pawn up. Although things were really not that simple, I was nevertheless expecting an easy win (What else to expect? After all I was playing my friend Jake ☺). However, Jake had different ideas and as a draw was OK for him, he offered one! In simuls I often get draw offers, but when I ask my opponents to give me one good reason why I should accept the offer, as in that case I might consider it, a deafening silence usually ensues ☺. Anyway I am just curious to know whether Jake himself would have offered a draw as White to a 2100 guy if he himself was in a must-win situation. As you will understand, I ended up losing that game, of course... When Mr. Timman sees that game (and I am sure he will ☺) he will have new inspiration for self-mate studies... After the game, when Jake and I were relaxing, his friend Dough joined the party and gave me a good piece of advice saying: 'You have to beat them when they are young!' Sigh. Dough, Jake is not Magnus. Jake is 24, for your information.

BETSY DYNAKO

The tournament in Las Vegas was won by Giorgi Kacheishvili, who had a slightly better tie-break than Jiri Stocek and took home $7,800.

Below: Josh Friedel (who started with 5 out of 5 in Vegas, beating Akobian and Shulman on the way) wasn't too happy that our reporter included two of his losses in his travelogue.

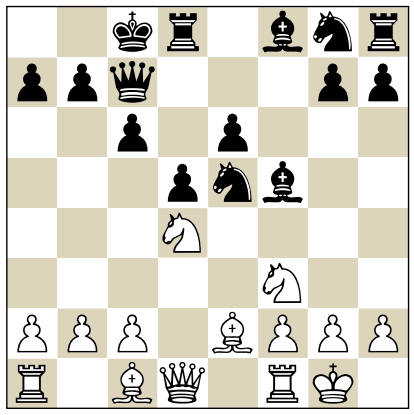
The tournament was won by Giorgi Kacheishvili, who collected the same number of points as Jiri Stocek (6 from 7) but had a slightly better tie-break. Kacheishvili earned $7,800, while Stocek, another regular guest at the American Opens these days, took home $7,597. Here is one of Giorgi's wins.

CK 4.2 – B12
Joshua Friedel
Giorgi Kacheishvili
Las Vegas 2010 (7)

So, here we are at the most interesting situation of the tournament. This is what it looks like at the start of the last round: the match-ups are: Stocek with 5½ points has to play with black and try to stop the always dangerous Shabalov (who is half a point down, however) with white; Mitkov on 5 points with white will face Smirin, who is probably still thinking about his missed wins against Kacheishvili in the previous round, while Mezentsev (also with 5 points) is paired with white with the notorious Mr. Akobian. Mr. Akobian is most notorious for his great mathematical skills and vision. After his draw offer against Fressinet (who played on and lost) in Las Vegas last year, he tried his luck again in Round 5 against my friend Robbie Ris. Robbie, however, didn't blink and took the draw and five minutes later was enjoying himself with a beer ☺. Friedel had a nice start with 5 out of 5, beating Akobian and Shulman on the way, but had just lost the morning game vs Stocek. Giorgi (Kacheishvili), quite solid throughout the tournament, was happy to escape vs Smirin, but I guess not too happy to play another black. Anyway, who cares about what happened before, they were both in a must-win situation.

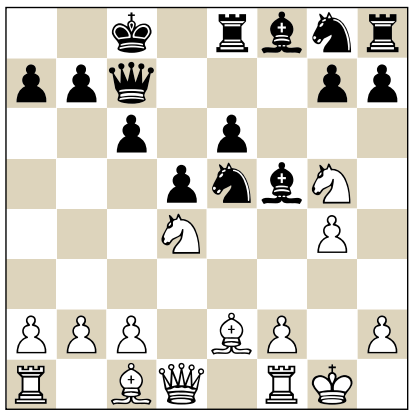
1.e4 c6 Giorgi's favourite choice, which has netted him many points in those American Opens.

2.d4 d5 3.e5 ♗f5 4.♘d2 e6 5.♘b3 ♘d7 6.♘f3 ♕c7 7.♗e2 f6 8.0-0 fxe5 9.dxe5 0-0-0 10.♘bd4 ♘xe5



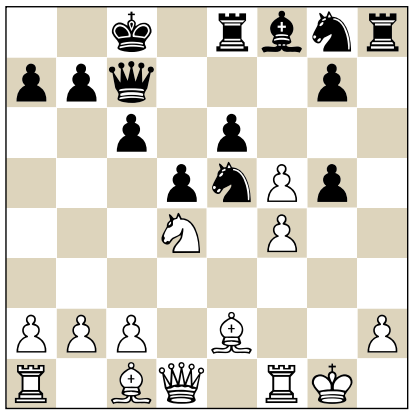
11.♘g5 Seemingly a new move, but I am not sure it was prepared; nor do I think it will find many fans. 11.♖e1 was played by Lenderman before.

11...♖e8 12.g4?
He must have missed Black's next move. (On the other hand, what else could he do?)



12...h6
Things start to look very dangerous as early as move 12. I am not surprised my engine is crashing already.

13.gxf5 hxg5 14.f4
The point of White's play, but it seems I don't have a monopoly on suicidal play...



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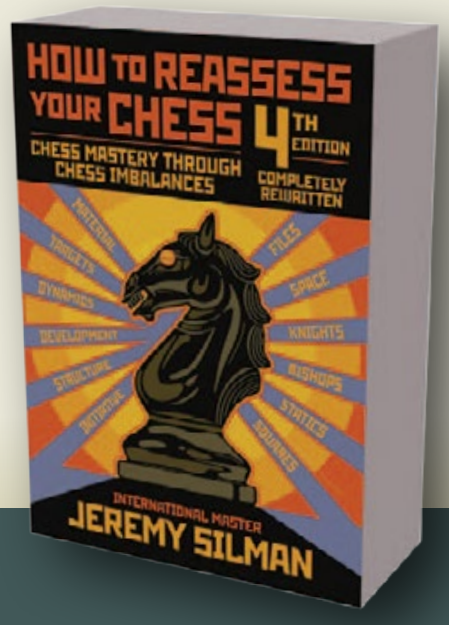

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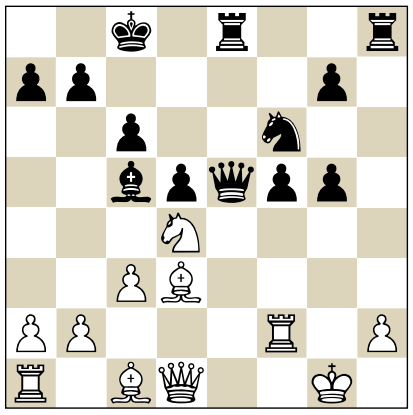
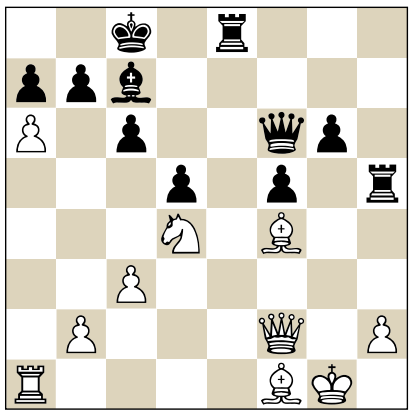
14...exf5
Not bad, but it was already time to wrap up the game with 14...gxf4! 15.♘xe6 ♖xe6 16.fxe6 ♗c5+ 17.♔h1 f3 18.♗f4 ♘g4!!, and White can resign.
15.fxe5 ♕xe5 16.♖f2 ♗c5 17.c3 ♘f6 18.♗d3



18...g6?!
I like the greedy 18...f4!, as it not only keeps the pawn but also closes down White's dark-squared bishop.
19.♗xg5 ♘g4 20.♕d2 ♘xf2 21.♕xf2
After all it's still a game!
21...♗b6
An obscure prophylactic move. I'd say, Black had better things to do in this position!
22.a4 ♖h3 23.♗f1 ♖h5 24.♗f4 ♕f6 25.a5 ♗c7 26.a6

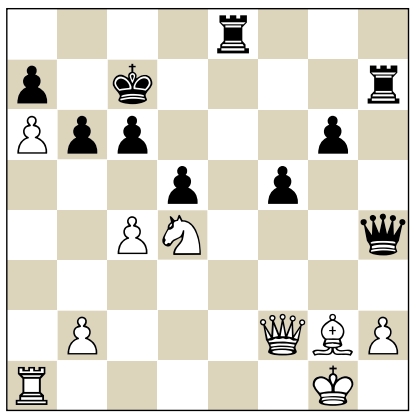


Finally White is doing something as well ☺.
26...b6 27.♗g2 ♖h7
I think that by now I'd prefer to play with white, especially when you know the history of the game. Things have been turning around and it might be difficult for Black to cope with that.
28.♗xc7 ♔xc7 29.c4 ♕h4

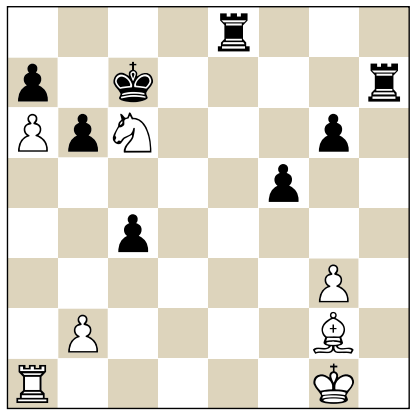
BETSY DYNAKO

Samuel Shankland was visibly delighted that King Loek didn't test his nerves, so he could make his final GM norm.

In the final two rounds of the Atlantic City International Alex Lenderman drew with Van Wely and lost to co-winner Kamsky.



30.♕g3+?
Josh may have overlooked Black's 32nd move.
After 30.cxd5, the pawn on d5 gets weak, and in addition, the pawn on a6 is a serious pain.
30...♕xg3 31.hxg3 dxc4 32.♘xc6



32...♔d6!
Now Black's rooks are cooperating well and his queenside is suddenly an asset.
33.♖d1+ ♔c5 34.♘d8
The fishing hour has started, but it's not going to work against Giorgi.
34...b5 35.♖d5+ ♔b6 36.♖d6+ ♔c5 37.♖d5+ ♔b6 38.♖d6+ ♔c7 39.♘b7 ♖e1+ 40.♔f2 ♖b1 41.♗d5 ♖xb2+ 42.♔e3 ♖d7 43.♖c6+ ♔b8 44.♗e6 ♖c7 45.♖d6 ♖b3+ 46.♔f4 ♖d3 47.♗d5 c3 48.♘a5 c2
White resigned. Congrats to Giorgi. I just checked his records, he has been a beast this year in the American opens!

Into the Sabbatical

Officially my sabbatical started on January 1, but of course one shouldn't be too strict in such matters, certainly not if you get an invitation to play in the Berkeley International (not that strong, some 10 GMs) close to San Francisco. As I was an invited player and as I was essentially enjoying a sabbatical, I decided to play the role of Mr. Nice Guy for once in my life. No excessive violence this time. In Round 9 I once again had to play Samuel Shankland, who, as in Chicago (see New In Chess 2010/5), needed a draw to achieve his GM ti-

tle. As in the past my alter ego would have loved to abuse such a situation, Sam was definitely very nervous. But this time I didn't even bother to refuse Sam's draw offer (or, just to tease him, turn the offer down and offer him a draw two moves later, a trick I used to love to make them sweat a bit ☺). However, when Sam said after the game that he would be pretty hard to beat in this line anyway, I couldn't resist: 'Ah, so you want to continue playing??!' ☺

Anyway, apparently my good deed had its effect on my Karma, because after drawing my game my rival Sergey Erenburg lost to Denys Shmeliov (2357), which paved the way for my first victory in my sabbatical and a modest $3,000 paycheck. The following game was my best win.

SI 21.2 – B82
Joshua Friedel
Loek van Wely
Berkeley 2011 (5)

Although I had officially announced that 2011 was going to be my sabbatical year, I still squeezed in a tournament at the very start of the year. I am afraid touristic reasons were more important than being strict on myself (although this way I left the backdoor open for people, especially my rivals and some 'fans' in Holland, to complain that I am still playing...).

1.e4

It wasn't my intention to pick on Josh in this article, but somehow I liked this game from a conceptual point of view.

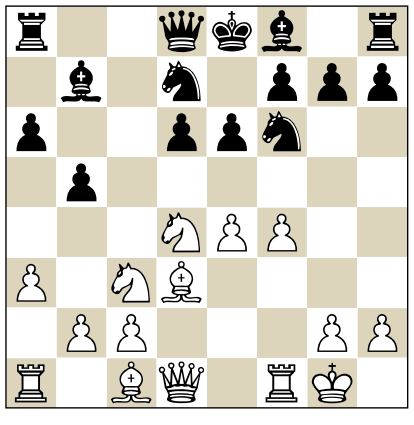
1...c5 2.♘f3 d6

In my sabbatical I honoured the principle: a dead man can eat anything. So the Najdorf was back on the menu ☺.

3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.f4 e6 7.♗d3 ♘bd7 8.0-0 b5

Played after a long think. Somehow I got distracted by the possibility of grabbing the pawn on b2 (8...♕b6 9.♗e3 ♕xb2), and started to compare the differences with the Poisoned Pawn Variation. Although I couldn't find anything against it, I decided to be practical this time.

9.a3 ♗b7



10.♔h1?!

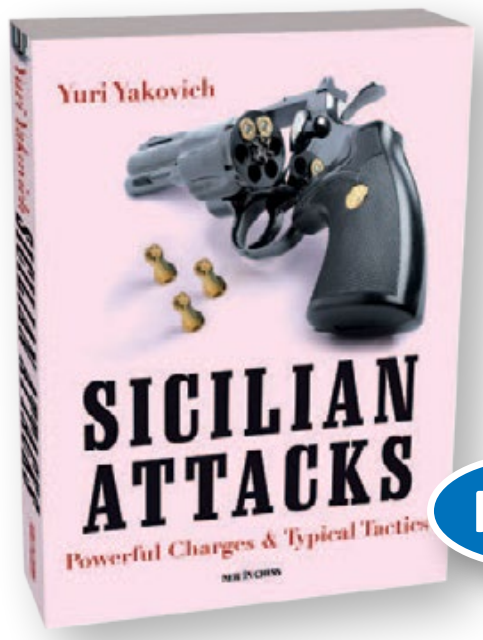
I am always happy to see this kind of move. First of all it wastes time: it is not clear what it is doing for White, and secondly, Black has just put his bishop on b7, so if there is one place where the white king should feel very uncomfortable, it would be precisely on h1!

10...g6!

The most ambitious move. If Black can put his bishop on g7 and manages to castle, he has reached his ideal set-up. At this point I was seriously down on time, which Robbie R. interpreted as a sign of weakness. Always funny to see how people project their own problems on you...

11.♗e3 ♗g7

> 'I had officially announced that 2011 was going to be my sabbatical year...'



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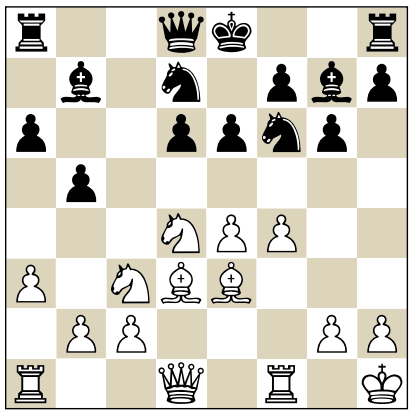
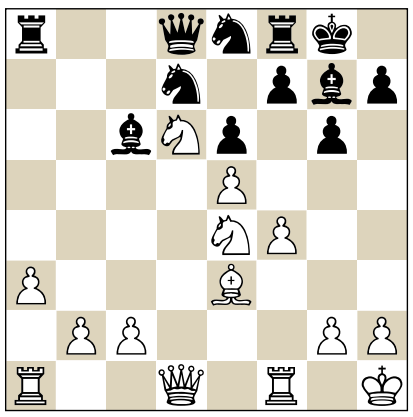
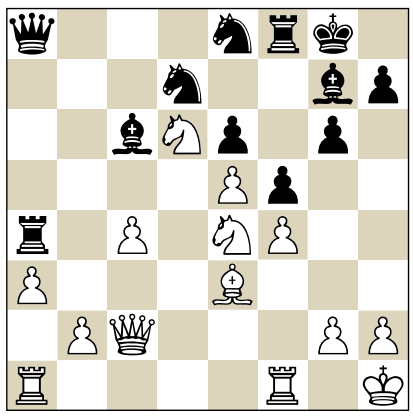
One of the side-events in Atlantic City was a simul by Gata Kamsky. The photo, as the others in this article, was taken by Betsy Dynako.



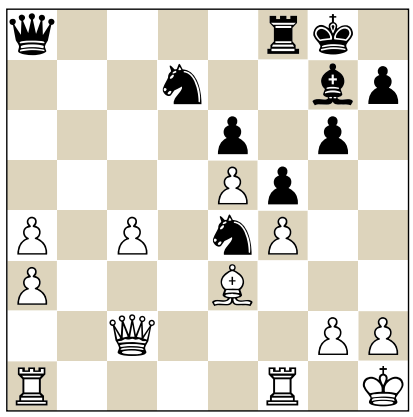
12.♗xb5 Already a sign of slight panic, but what else to do? White had to do something and it had to be done quickly. **12...axb5 13.♘dxb5 0-0 14.♘xd6 ♗c6 15.e5 ♘e8**
I saw some fancy stuff with 15...♘h5 and ...♗h6, but this seemed unnecessary. **16.♘ce4**



16...♖a4
16...f6 was another thematic approach.
17.c4 ♕a8 18.♕c2 f5
My first intention was 18...♘xd6 19.♘xd6 f6 20.♗d4 fxe5 21.fxe5, but then I realized that taking on e5 is not so funny with some pieces locked out of the action.

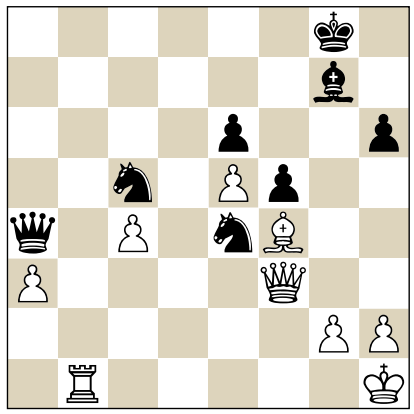


19.♘c5 19.exf6 ♘dxf6 is what I wanted to reach.
19...♘xd6 20.♘xa4 ♗xa4 21.b3 ♘e4! 22.bxa4

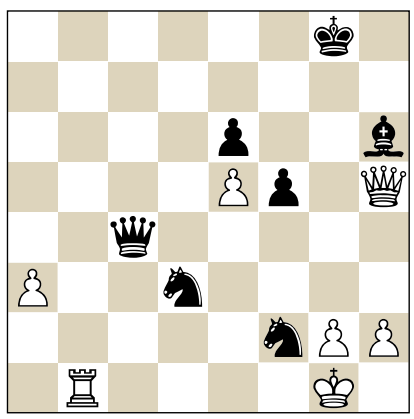


22...g5!
The position has transformed completely, from a piece vs 3 pawns to 2 pieces vs rook and 3 pawns, but White's pawn structure is destroyed and he will also be unable to keep his pawn chain in the centre intact.

23.♕b2 gxf4 24.♗xf4 ♖b8 25.♕d4 ♘dc5 26.♕d1 ♖b2 27.♕f3 ♕xa4 Stronger was 27...♘d7!. **28.♖ab1 ♖xb1 29.♖xb1 h6**



30.♖c1? A mistake, of course, but practically speaking the position was already very hard to defend anyway.
30...♘d3 31.♖b1 ♕xc4 32.♗xh6 ♗xh6 33.♕h5 ♘ef2+ 34.♔g1



34...♘h3+! A nice finishing touch.
35.gxh3 ♗e3+
Mating or winning the queen and mating. White resigned. ■

In an all-Chinese final, 16-year-old Hou Yifan defeated her compatriot Ruan Lufei to become the youngest Women's World Champion in history. The former prodigy broke the 32-year-old record of Maya Chiburdanidze, who was 17 when she claimed the highest title. Among the rivals that Hou Yifan knocked out in Antakya, Turkey, were former champion Zhu Chen, Kateryna Lahno and top-seed Humpy Koneru. The revelation of the championship was 23-year-old Ruan Lufei, who was born in Nanjing and currently studies accountancy at Carnegie Mellon University in the U.S. Seeded 15th, Ruan Lufei saw all her mini-matches go into extra time. The first five, including the one against defending champion Alexandra Kosteniuk, she won in the tie-breaks. Only in the final, in her sixth tie-break, after four classical games had resulted in a 2-2 score, did Ruan Lufei have to admit defeat. Hou Yifan kept her cool and conquered the title that no one had doubted would sooner or later be hers.

Hou Yifan writes history

MARIA BOLSHAKOVA

The moment of truth is near. FIDE president Kirsan Ilyumzhinov wishes Hou Yifan and Ruan Lufei success in the final.

A happy new World Champion and her proud mother.

NOTES BY
Hou Yifan

SI 47.3 – B22
Kateryna Lahno
Hou Yifan
Antakya 2010 (4.1)

This was my third time to take part in a Women's World Chess Championship. Before this game we had played each other four times. We made three draws and I lost one game to her in 2007. This game was interesting; we both made several mistakes. Anyway let's see it!

1.e4 c5 2.c3

A big surprise. In my preparation I had checked Kateryna's games: she had only played 2.♘f3.

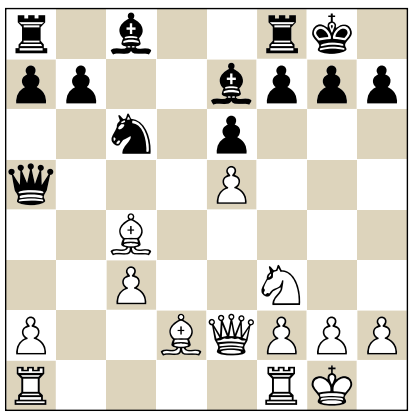
2...♘f6

Recently I played 2...g6 against Gaponenko in the European Club Cup, Plovdiv 2010, but the text-move is more common.

3.e5 ♘d5 4.♘f3 ♘c6 5.♗c4 e6

In the 2007 European Club Cup I played 5...♘b6 against Pähtz. That game continued 6.♗b3 c4 7.♗c2 ♕c7 8.♕e2 g5 and was finally drawn.

6.d4 cxd4 7.cxd4 d6 8.0-0 ♗e7 9.♕e2 0-0 10.♘c3 ♘xc3 11.bxc3 dxe5 12.dxe5 ♕a5 13.♗d2



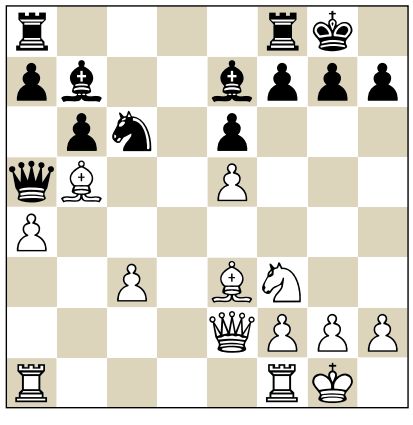
13...b6?

A huge mistake. After this move Black is almost lost! We have often seen 13...♖d8 14.♖fe1 ♗d7 15.♗b3 ♗e8 16.♕e4 ♖d7 17.♖ac1 ♖ad8, with counterplay. Black's kingside is not so safe, but White has two weak pawns (a2 and c3).

14.a4?

So far I had spent half an hour, while Kateryna's clock was still on 1:30. She also played this move very quickly, but she overlooked a good chance here: 14.♗b5 ♗b7 15.a3!. I think both of us missed this move during the game. Now Black's queen has a big problem and White prepares c4. After 15...♖ad8 16.♗e1 ♗xa3 17.♘d4 White will win a piece.

14...♕c5 15.♗e3 ♕a5 16.♗b5 ♗b7



17.♕b2

Here Kateryna thought for a long time. In fact, this position already appeared several years ago! In that game

MARIA BOLSHAKOVA

Three Chinese medallists: Ruan Lufei (silver), Hou Yifan (gold) and Zhao Xue (bronze).

White played 17.♘d4 ♘xd4 18.cxd4 ♖ac8, and Black is OK.

17...a6 18.♗xc6

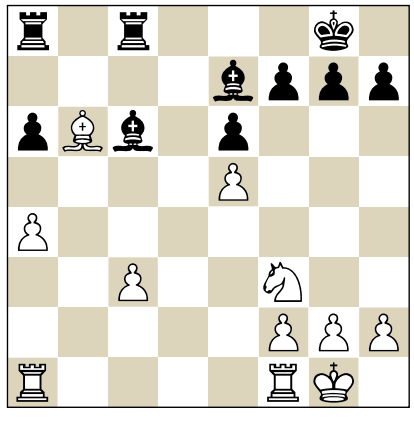
This position looks very dangerous for Black. Kateryna chose to go for a pawn. She also could have played 18.♖fb1 axb5 19.axb5 ♗a3 20.♕b3 (20.♕c2 ♘b4! 21.♖xb4 ♗xb4 22.♖xa5 ♗xa5 is unclear) 20...♘e7 21.♗c1 ♗xf3 22.gxf3 ♕a7 23.♗xa3 ♖fc8, and although White has won a pawn, her kingside is weak, Black's knight is stronger than White's bishop, and Black also controls the a-file, so I think Black has enough compensation.

18...♗xc6 19.♕xb6

I think that exchanging the queens is the correct way.

After 19.♗xb6 ♖fb8 20.♖fb1 ♕d5 Black has compensation for the pawn.

19...♕xb6 20.♗xb6 ♖fc8

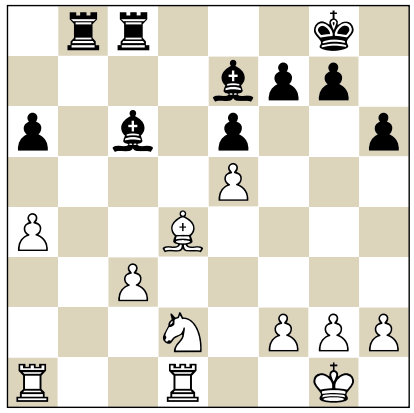


Here I thought that Black was OK. White's extra pawn on c3 is not easy to push forward, and Black has the bishop pair and will be able to exchange to an opposite-coloured bishop ending, so it is almost a drawn position.

21.♗d4 ♖ab8

I want to keep my bishop pair. The easy way was 21...♗xf3 22.gxf3 ♖c4 (a strong square!) 23.♖fd1 ♗c5, with equality.

22.♖fd1 h6 23.♘d2

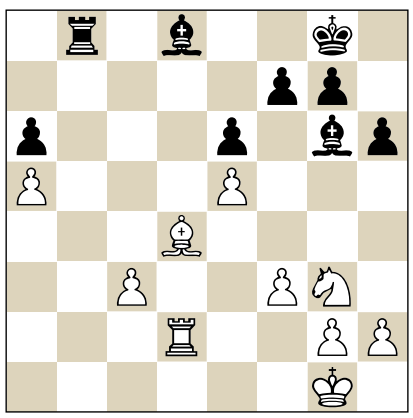


23...♗d5 24.♖db1 ♗g5 25.♘f1 ♗c6 26.a5 ♖xb1 27.♖xb1 ♗b5 28.♘g3 ♗d8 29.♖a1 ♗d3 30.f3

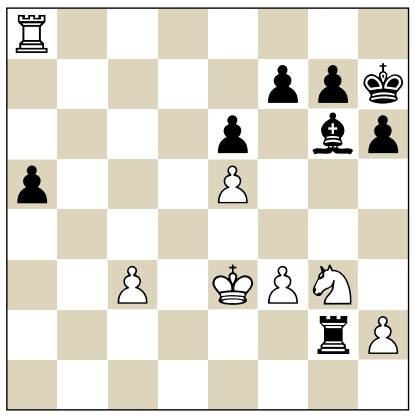
Antakya 2010

Final		
Ruan Lufei - Hou Yifan	**3**	**5**
Round 5		
Ruan Lufei - Zhao Xue	**2½**	**1½**
Humpy Koneru - Hou Yifan	**½**	**1½**
Round 4		
Ruan Lufei - Harika Dronavalli	**2½**	**1½**
Koneru Humpy - Ju Wenjun	**1½**	**½**
Hou Yifan - Kateryna Lahno	**1½**	**½**
Zhao Xue - Almira Skripchenko	**1½**	**½**
Round 3		
Alexandra Kosteniuk - Ruan Lufei	**1½**	**2½**
Humpy Koneru - Anna Zatonskih	**1½**	**½**
Hou Yifan - Zhu Chen	**2½**	**1½**
Zhao Xue - Yelena Dembo	**1½**	**½**
Viktorija Cmilyte - Almira Skripchenko	**2**	**4**
Kateryna Lahno - Qian Huang	**1½**	**½**
Anna Muzychuk - Ju Wenjun	**½**	**1½**
Harika Dronavalli - Mariya Muzychuk	**4**	**3**

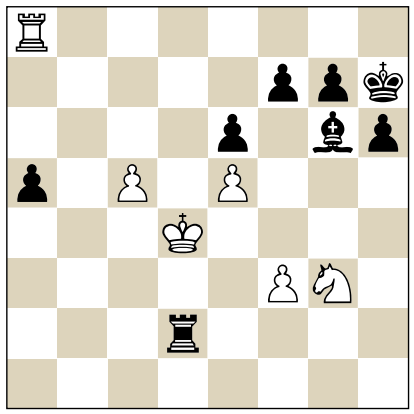
♖b8 31.♖d1 ♗c2!
Here we both had only five minutes left. Now, after 31...♗g6 32.♗a7! ♖c8 33.♗b6, White is better, but the win is still difficult enough.
32.♖d2 ♗g6



33.♗b6?!
In time-pressure, Kateryna decides to exchange the bishops, but now Black has a passed pawn on the a-file.
Better was 33.♔f2, e.g. 33...♗xa5 34.♖a2 ♗d8 35.♖xa6 ♖b2+ 36.♔e3 ♗g5+ 37.f4 ♗h4 38.♔f3 ♗xg3, with a drawn position.
33...♗xb6+ 34.axb6 ♖xb6 35.♖d8+ ♔h7 36.♔f2 a5 37.♖a8 ♖b2+! 38.♔e3!?
A brave decision! After 38.♔g1 ♖b5 39.f4 I think Black has some winning chances, because White's king and knight are badly placed. Black's bishop and king are much better.
38...♖xg2



39.c4?!
I think my opponent had missed my next move. She should have played 39.♘e2! ♖xh2 40.c4 ♖h4 41.♘d4 ♖h1 42.♔d2! ♖a1 43.c5 ♖a4! 44.♔c3 ♖a3+ 45.♔b2 ♖d3, although Black has a clear advantage anyway.
39...♖c2! 40.♔d4 ♖xh2 41.c5 ♖d2+

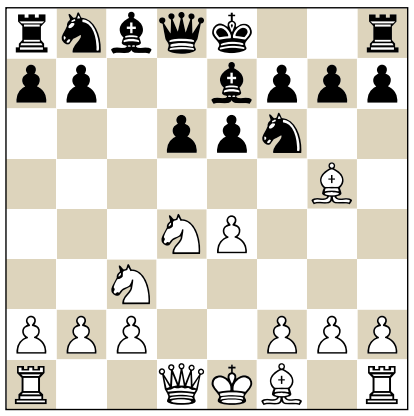


42.♔c4?
Now Black will win easily. A better move is 42.♔e3 ♖d3+ 43.♔f4 ♖a3 44.♖a7 a4 45.♘e2 ♗d3 46.♘d4 ♖c3, and Black wins.
42...♖c2+ 43.♔b5?!
43.♔d4 would have been better, but still not enough to change the result: 43...h5 44.♖xa5 h4 45.♘f1 h3 46.♖a3 f6, and Black wins.
43...h5 44.♖xa5 h4 45.♘h1 ♗h5 46.♖a3 ♖h2 47.c6 ♖xh1 48.♖c3 ♖b1+ 49.♔c5 h3 50.♖c2 ♗xf3 51.c7 ♗b7 52.♖c3 ♖h1 53.♔b6 ♗c8
White resigned. A lucky game!

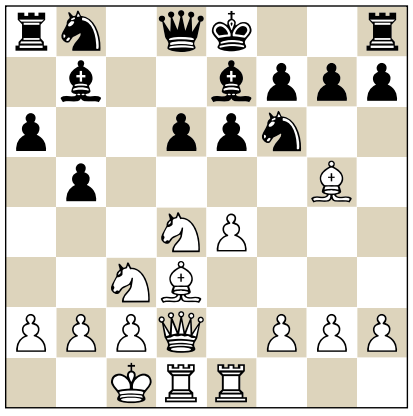
NOTES BY
Hou Yifan

QP 4.11 – B95
Humpy Koneru
Hou Yifan
Antakya 2010 (5.2)

This game was very important. I had won the first one (with a Berlin Defence), which meant I only needed a draw, so I think my opponent had to go for a rare line in this game ☺.
We have played each other many times in recent years, for example in the 2008 Women's World Chess Championship, in the same situation: the semi-final!
1.d4 e6 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♗g5 c5
Because I never thought that Humpy would play 3.♗g5, I decided to play this line. I recently played 3...h6 4.♗h4 b6 many times, maybe she had prepared something for this ☺.
4.♘c3 The main line is 4.e3, which Stefanova played against me in Krasnoturinsk 2006.
4...cxd4 5.♘xd4 ♗e7
During the game I just wanted the position to revert to the Sicilian. Another choice could have been 5...d5!? 6.e4! dxe4 7.♘db5 ♕a5 8.♗f4, and the activity of White's pieces compensates for the pawn.
6.e4 d6



Now we are back in the Sicilian. My opponent had only used up two minutes – maybe she had prepared this line?!
7.♕d2 a6 8.0-0-0 b5 9.♗d3
Another possibility is 9.f3.
9...♗b7 10.♖he1



10...b4!?

I don't want to give Humpy chances for a sacrifice: if 10...♘bd7 11.f4 b4 12.♘d5! exd5 13.e5! (I missed this move – 13.exd5 0-0) 13...dxe5 14.fxe5 ♘g8 15.♗xe7 ♘xe7 16.e6 ♘c5 17.exf7+ ♔xf7 18.♕f4+ ♔g8 19.♕e3 ♔f8 20.♖f1+, and White has enough compensation and a strong attack.

11.♘b1

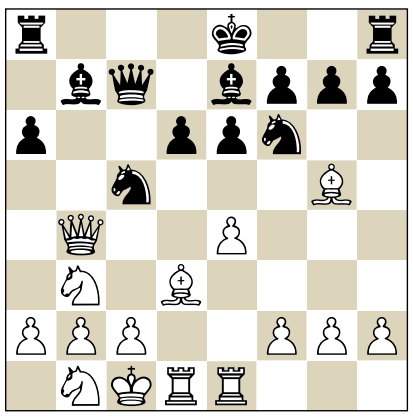
A solid move. During the game I was afraid of 11.♘d5! ♘xd5 12.exd5 ♗xg5 13.f4 ♗f6 14.dxe6 0-0 15.♕xb4! ♗d5 16.♗c4 ♗xc4 17.♕xc4, and White has some compensation. Maybe not enough but I think she should have gone for this line.

11...♘bd7 12.♕xb4 ♘c5

I had missed White's next move.

After 12...♖b8!? 13.♕d2 0-0 14.f3 ♘c5 15.♘c3 ♕b6 16.♘b3 ♗c6 Black has compensation. As in a typical Sicilian attack, the sacrificed b-pawn has netted Black two open files, so she can start a queenside attack.

13.♘b3! ♕c7



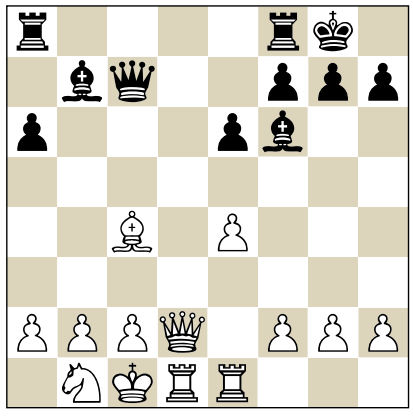
14.♘xc5

Here Humpy used up 30 minutes. I think that 14.f3 was interesting: 14...0-0 15.♘xc5 dxc5 16.♕d2 c4 17.♗f1, and although Black has compensation, White's plan is clear: knight to c3, king to a1, with a complicated position.

14...dxc5 15.♕d2

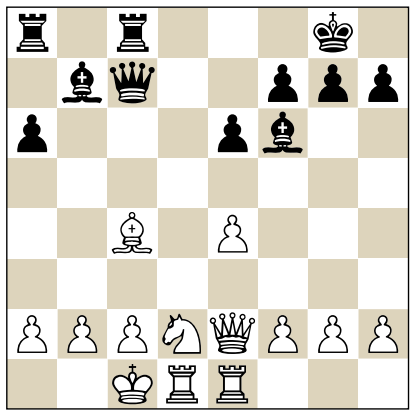
Here the queen has many squares, for example 15.♕c4 h6 16.♗e3 ♘g4, or 15.♕b3 ♖b8! (15...h6 16.♗h4!, and with the queen on b3 Black can't give check on f4) 16.e5 ♗c6 17.♕c3 ♘d5 18.♕d2 0-0 19.♗xe7 ♘xe7 20.f3, with counterplay.

15...c4 16.♗xf6 ♗xf6 17.♗xc4 0-0



Now White is two pawns up, but Black has a strong bishop and two open files, which gives her strong attacking chances.

18.♕e2 ♖fc8 19.♘d2

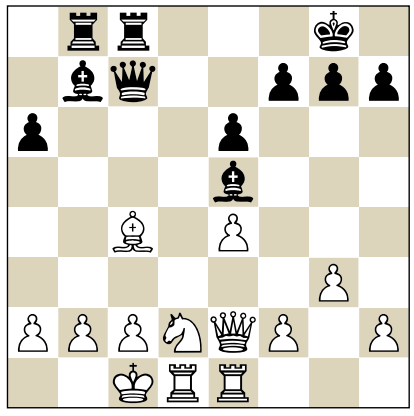


19...♗e5?

I only had 10 minutes left and still 21 moves to go before the time-control and I failed to find a good plan. Black's plan is clear: push the a-pawn to break the white queenside, for example 19...a5!? 20.e5 ♗e7 21.♔b1 ♖ab8, with sufficient compensation.

After 19...♖ab8 20.e5 ♗g5?! (back to e7 is better) 21.♔b1 a5 22.♗b3 ♗c6 23.a4 ♗d5 24.♘f3! White has an advantage.

20.g3 ♖ab8



21.♘b3?

Maybe Humpy was afraid of the sacrifice on b2, but anyway she should have played 21.f4 ♗xb2+ 22.♔xb2 ♗d5+ 23.♔c1 ♕a5 24.♗b3 ♗xb3 25.axb3 (25.♘xb3?? ♖xb3, with equality) 25...♕a1+ 26.♘b1 ♖xb3 27.♖d8+! ♖xd8 28.cxb3 ♖c8+ 29.♔d2, and White has won a piece.

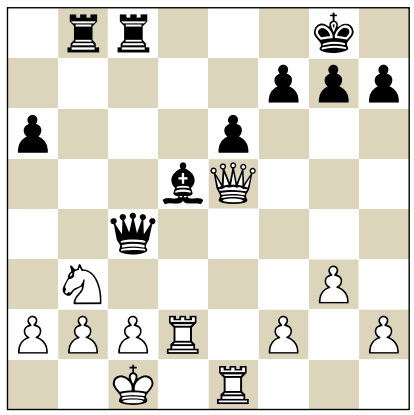
21...♗f6

Still missing the right plan: 21...a5! 22.f4 ♗f6 23.e5 ♗e7, with an unclear position.

22.e5?!

Humpy wants to clear the position, but I think after this move Black will have no real difficulties. Maybe she should have tried 22.♗d3 a5! 23.e5 ♗e7 24.♔b1 a4 25.♘d4 a3 26.♘b5 ♗f3! 27.♘xc7 ♖xb2+ 28.♔a1 ♗xe2 29.♖xe2 ♖xc7, with an equal endgame.

22...♗xe5 23.♕xe5 ♕xc4 24.♖d2 ♗d5



Black is a pawn down, but she has a strong bishop on d5, which gives enough compensation.

25.♔b1

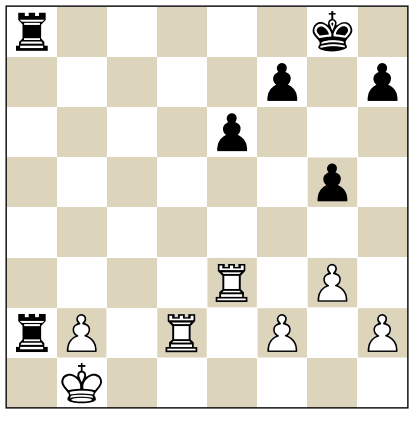
A little mistake, returning the pawn.

Better was 25.♕e2 ♕c6 26.♕d3 ♕b7, with counterplay.

25...a5 26.♘c1 ♕b4 27.c3 ♕xc3

I just needed a draw, so I chose a simpler continuation. 27...♖xc3 28.♘d3! ♖xd3 29.♖xd3 f6 30.a3 ♗c4 31.♖f3 ♕b7 32.♕c3 ♖c8 is unclear.

28.♕xc3 ♖xc3 29.♘b3 ♖c4 30.♘xa5 ♖a4 31.♘b3 ♖ba8 32.♘c1 ♗xa2+ 33.♘xa2 ♖xa2 34.♖e3 g5!



After this series of moves I understood that the game would end in a draw.

35.♖d7 ♖a1+ 36.♔c2 ♖c8+ 37.♔d2 ♖cc1 38.♖b7 ♖d1+ 39.♔c2 ♖ac1+ 40.♔b3 ♖d2 41.f4 41.♖f3 ♖cc2! 42.♖bxf7 ♖xb2+. **41...gxf4 42.gxf4 ♖xh2 43.f5 exf5 44.♖ee7 ♖h6 45.♖xf7** Draw.

Here I'd like to express my warm gratitude to FIDE and the Turkish Chess Federation, and especially to all my chess fans over the world ☺.

And finally, thanks for watching!

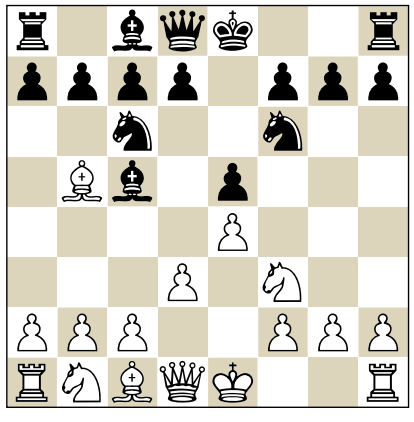
NOTES BY

Ruan Lufei

RL 7.2 – C65
Alexandra Kosteniuk
Ruan Lufei
Antakya 2010 (rapid 3.1)

After the two classical games had ended in a draw, this was the first of the rapid play-off games in Round 3.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♘f6 4.d3 ♗c5



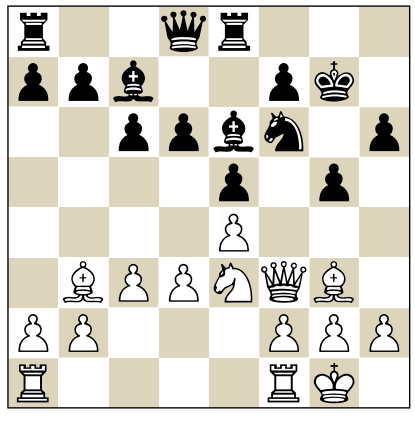
5.0-0

Most players prefer the variation starting with 5.c3!?, for instance 5...0-0 6.0-0 d6 7.♗g5 h6 8.♗h4 g5 9.♗g3 ♗g4 10.h3 ♗h5 11.♗xc6 bxc6 12.♘bd2.

5...♘d4

This is the reason White should play 5.c3 rather than 5.0-0.

6.♘xd4 ♗xd4 7.♘d2 c6 8.♗a4 d6 9.c3 ♗b6 10.♗b3 0-0 11.♘c4 ♗c7 12.♗g5 h6 13.♗h4 g5 14.♗g3 ♖e8 15.♘e3 ♔g7 16.♕f3 ♗e6



17.♘f5+?!

It's not a good idea for White to claim the bishop pair now, since the position is too closed and a knight may be better than a bishop. After 17.♗xe6 fxe6 18.a4 ♖f8 19.♕d1 ♕d7 20.♘g4 ♘xg4 21.♕xg4 ♕f7 the position would be equal.

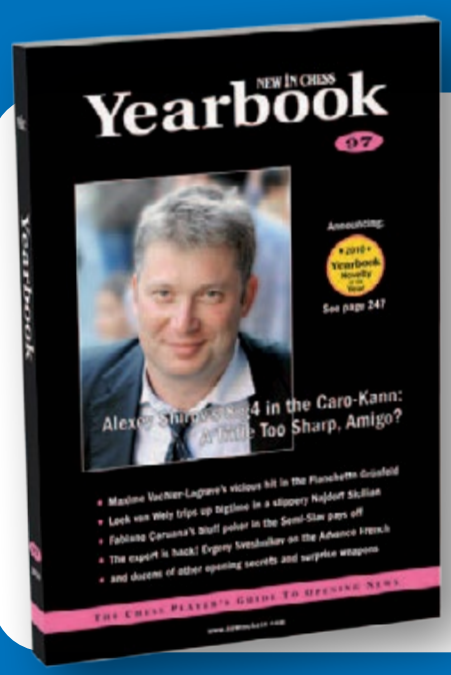
17...♗xf5 18.♕xf5 ♕c8 19.♕f3 ♕g4 20.♕xg4

Another idea was 20.♕e3 ♗b6 21.♕d2.

20...♘xg4 21.f3 ♗b6+ 22.♔h1?!

Easier was 22.d4!? ♘f6 (22...♘e3? 23.♖fe1 f5 24.♖xe3 exd4 25.cxd4 favours White) 23.♗f2, with an equal position.

22...♘e3 23.♖fc1 f5



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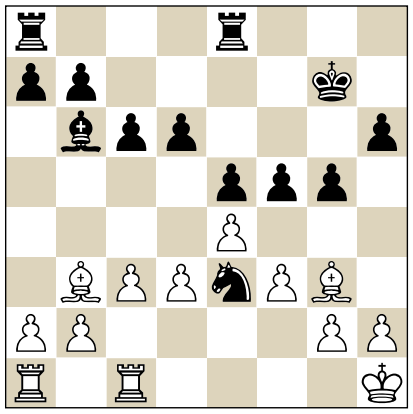
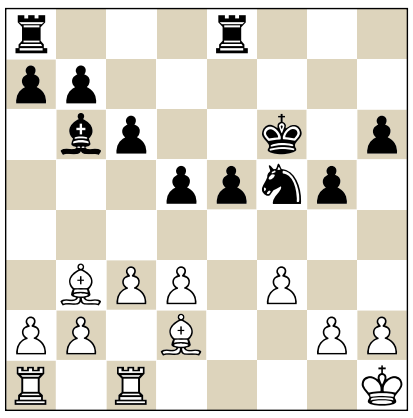


24.exf5?!

White loses her last chance to exchange Black's knight against her bishop. As the game shows, it's obvious that the knight is much stronger than the bishop in such a position. More cautious was 24.a4 a5 25.♗f2 f4, although here, too, Black is better.

24...♘xf5 25.♗e1 d5 26.♗d2 ♔f6

It's very difficult for White to find a clear plan now. All she can do is wait and try to solve the problems that Black will create for her. On the other hand, Black has several possible plans, such as ...h5/...h4/...♖h8/...♘g3 to take advantage of the dangerous position of the white king.



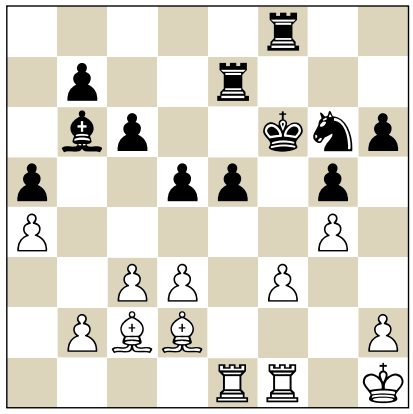
27.g4?!

A line illustrative of the strength of Black's position is 27.♖e1 h5 28.♖e2 (28.g4 ♘h4) 28...h4 29.♖ae1 ♖e7 30.d4 exd4 31.♖xe7 ♘xe7 32.♗xg5+ ♔xg5 33.♖xe7 ♔f6 34.♖e1 ♗a5 35.♖c1 ♖e8, and Black should win.

27...♘h4

I didn't like to swap the bishop with 27...♗e3?!, as I thought my bishop to be much better than White's.

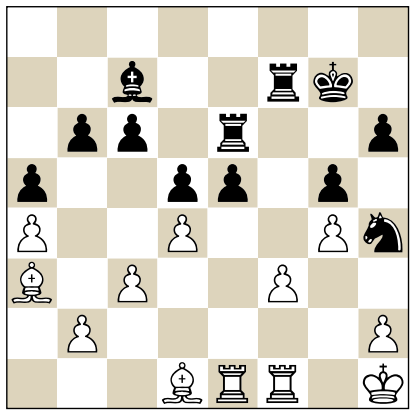
28.♖f1 ♘g6 29.♖ae1 ♖e7 30.a4 a5 31.♗c2 ♖f8



32.♖e2?

This is a mistake. Best was 32.d4!? exd4 33.♖xe7 ♘xe7 34.f4 ♔g7 35.♖e1 ♘c8 36.f5, when White seems to have the worst behind her.

32...♔g7 33.♖ee1 ♖ef7 34.♗d1 ♗c7 35.♗e3 ♘h4 36.♗c5 ♖e8 37.♗d4 ♖ee7 38.♗c5 ♖e6 39.d4 b6 40.♗a3



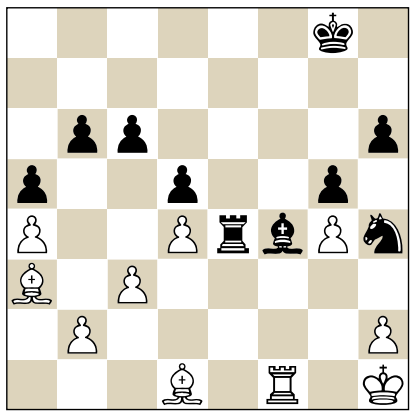
40...e4

Clearly stronger was 40...♖ff6!?.

41.fxe4 ♖xf1+ 42.♖xf1 ♖xe4 43.♗f8+ ♔g8 44.♗a3

The pawn is untouchable, as 44.♗xh6? loses the bishop after 44...♗f4.

44...♗f4



I saw this position on the 38th move.

Although there is no clear-cut and unambiguous method for Black to force a win, it's too difficult for White to find a clear plan of defence, since all her pieces are blocked and she has at least two weaknesses: the h2 pawn and the d1 bishop. Moreover, it was a rapid game, so I was sure the pressure was enough to make her commit more errors.

45.♔g1 ♖e3 46.♔f2

Or 46.♔h1 ♖h3 47.♖f2 ♖d3 48.♖f1 ♖d2 49.♖e1 ♖xh2+ 50.♔g1 ♖d2, and wins.

46...♖h3 47.♖h1 ♔f7 48.♔g1?!

The wrong direction, since Black wouldn't take the h2 pawn even if White didn't protect it.

Better was 48.♗c2 ♗e3+ 49.♔e2 ♘g2 50.♗d6 ♗f4 51.♗xf4 ♘xf4+ 52.♔d2 c5 53.dxc5 bxc5 54.♗f5, with continuing problems for White.

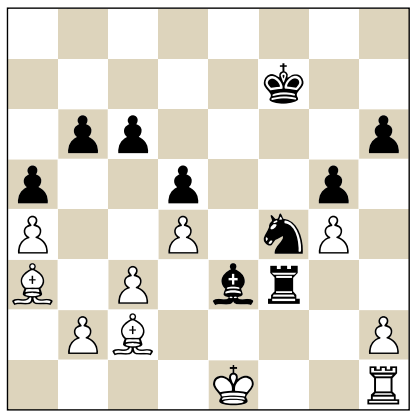
48...♗e3+

More precise was 48...♖d3 49.♔f2 ♖d2+ 50.♗e2 ♖c2.

49.♔f1 ♘g6 50.♗c2 ♘f4 51.♔e1

Or 51.♗d1 ♔e6 52.♗e2 c5 53.dxc5 ♗xc5 54.♗xc5 bxc5 55.♗a6 c4, and White is helpless.

51...♖f3



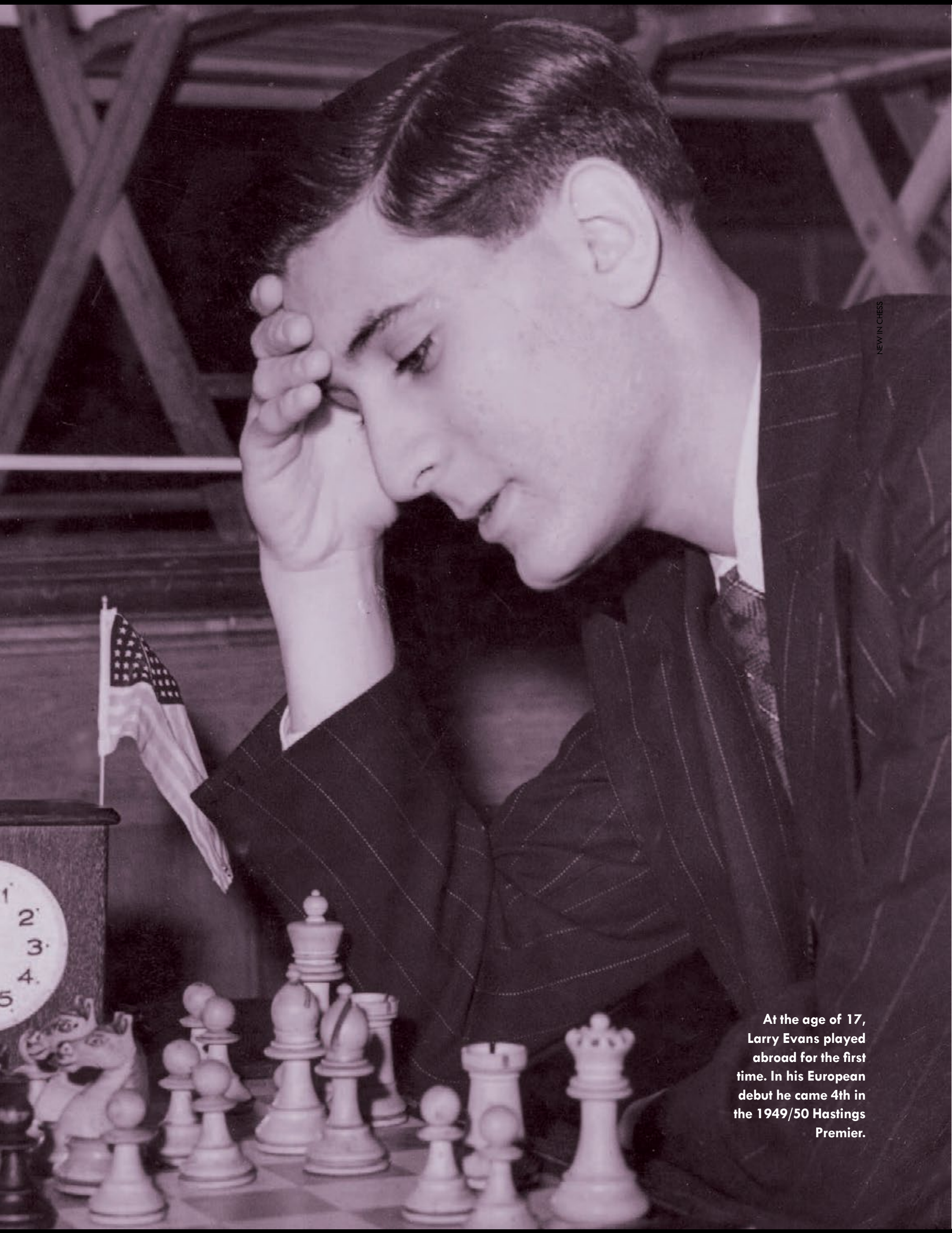
52.♔d1

This hastens the end, but White also loses fairly quickly after 52.♗d6 ♖f2 53.♗xf4 gxf4 54.♗d1 ♖xb2 55.h4 ♗f2+ 56.♔f1 ♖d2 57.♖h3 ♗xd4.

52...♖f2 53.♖e1 ♘g2 54.♖h1 ♗d2

White resigned.

The second rapid game ended in a draw, so I proceeded to the quarter finals. ■



At the age of 17, Larry Evans played abroad for the first time. In his European debut he came 4th in the 1949/50 Hastings Premier.

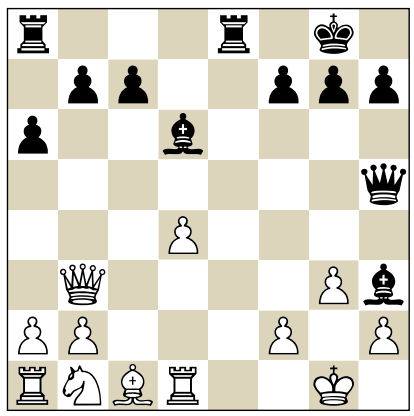
‘Chess is my bread and butter’

American grandmaster Larry Evans passed away on 15 November 2010 in a hospital in Reno, Nevada, after complications following surgery. He had reached 78 years of age. **Jimmy Adams** remembers a man who in his younger days, from the 1950s to the 1970s, was one of the top players in the USA and for well over half a century also one of its most prolific chess writers.

Larry Evans

Born in Manhattan, March 23, 1932, Larry was among the new generation of players to emerge in the USA after the Second World War. He learned chess at the age of six from his two older brothers and within a few years already owned several chess sets, even taking one of these to school each day so he could play at break time. At the age of 13 he started to collect chess books and gain valuable practice playing for dimes at the local park and the Chess and Checkers Club on 42nd street, in the heart of Times Square.

Here’s a striking example of Larry’s brilliant play as a teenager.



Robert Warner - Larry Evans
USA Junior Championship 1947

18...♖e3!! Reminiscent of the rook

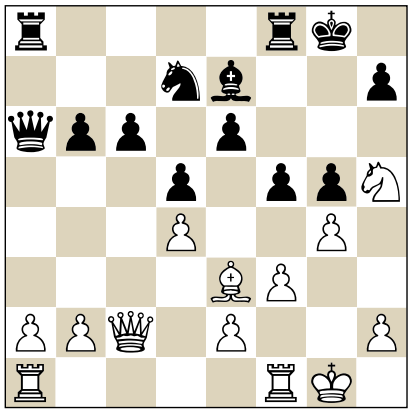
offer made by Alekhine in a famous game against Réti at Baden Baden 1925 – which in fact Larry was later to include in his 1953 primer *Chess in 10 Lessons*. **19.fxe3** If 19.♕xe3 (deflection) 19...♕xd1+ or 19.♗xe3 (obstruction) 19...♕f3 both mate. Or if 19.♕c2 (to meet 19...♕f3 with 20.fxe3 when the white queen covers g2 along the rank) 19...♖e2 20.♕b3 ♖ae8 21.♗d2 ♖2e3! 22.fxe3 ♕f3 wins, as 23.♕c2 is no longer a defence! **19...♕e2 20.♕xb7 ♕xd1+ 21.♔f2 ♕f1** mate.

By the standards of those times Evans could certainly be termed a chess prodigy, coming 4th in the Marshall Chess Club Championship at the age of 14 and then winning it in each of the next three years. Then again, at 15, playing in the U.S. Open at Corpus Christi, he crushed Canada's top player Yanofsky in sacrificial style, and, after two third places in two years, finally took the Open title at Fort Worth, Texas in 1951. In the meantime, still in his teens, he won the U.S. Speed and New York State Championships, and shared the U.S. junior title with another young talent, Arthur Bisguier.

At the age of 17, Larry played abroad for the first time, coming 4th in the Hastings Premier 1949/50, and then, later that year, won a gold medal for his 8/9 score on bottom board for the U.S. team at the Dubrovnik Olympiad.

Equally prodigious was his literary work. When he was only 16 he obtained a duplicating machine and self published two mimeographed chess books: *Vienna 1922* and *David Bronstein's Best Games 1944-1949*. At that time there was no proper record of the classic Vienna tournament, won by Rubinstein, and the games only existed in the form of rare carbon copy manuscripts. But Larry painstakingly typed out all 103 games, converting the scores from algebraic into descriptive notation and annotating them in the process. The Bronstein book was even more impressive, augmenting deep annotations translated from Russian sources with his own analysis and well-written introductions to over sixty games.

In 1951 he took 5th place at the Wertheim Memorial in New York, defeating former world champion Max Euwe in a game which included decisive pawn play – a frequently recurring theme in Larry's games and theories.



Max Euwe - Larry Evans
Wertheim Memorial, New York 1951

(Notes by Evans from *Chess in 10 Easy Lessons*)

21...♕c4!
Forcing the exchange of queens at the expense of doubled pawns – which in this case are in Black's favour since he can control the open queenside lines. White is at a loss for a good reply.

22.♕xc4
If 22.♕d2 ♖xa2; or on 22.♖fc1 ♕xc2 23.♖xc2 c5, with advantage.

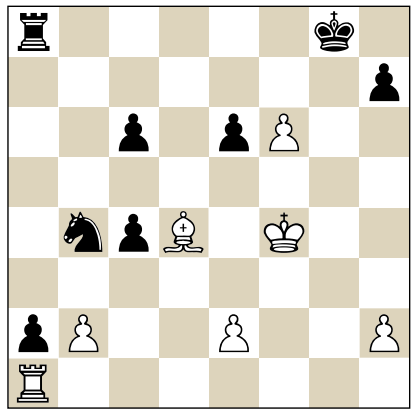
22...dxc4 23.f4
Black now forces a won endgame, but it is difficult to suggest better.

23...fxg4 24.fxg5 ♖xf1+ 25.♔xf1 b5 The general advance of the queenside pawns produces a decisive passed pawn on that wing. White's rook is tied down and his knight is out of play.

26.♔g2 ♘b6 27.♔g3 b4
There is no time to stop and defend.

28.♔xg4 b3 29.d5
An ingenious desperation attempt. After the game Euwe suggested 29.a3, but then 29...c3 followed by 30...♘c4 decides the issue.

29...♘xd5 30.♗d4 bxa2 31.♘f6+ ♗xf6 32.gxf6 ♘b4 33.♔f4



33...♔f7
Safety first! Not 33...♘c2 34.♖g1+ ♔f8 35.♗c5+ ♔f7 36.♔e5 ♖g8 37.♖xg8 ♔xg8 38.♔xe6 a1♕ 39.f7+ and wins! By losing a tempo, Black now wins the game.

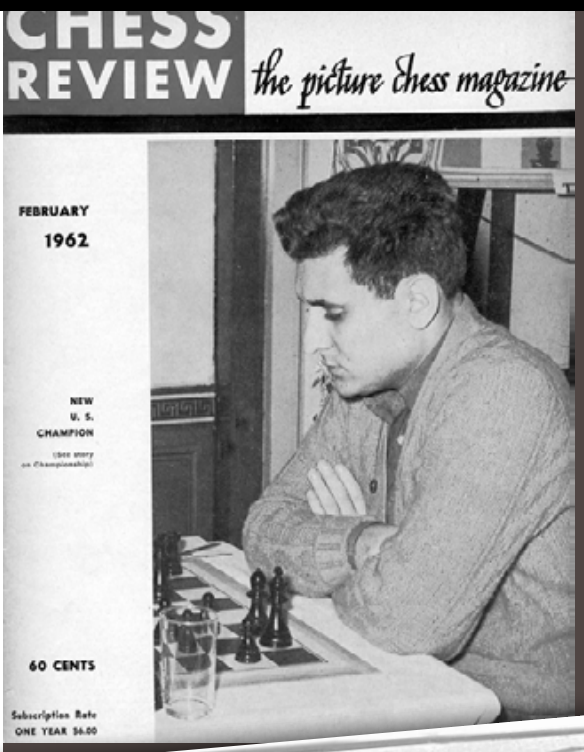
34.♗e5
Now 34.♖g1 is met by 34...♖g8 35.♖a1 ♘c2, picking up a piece.

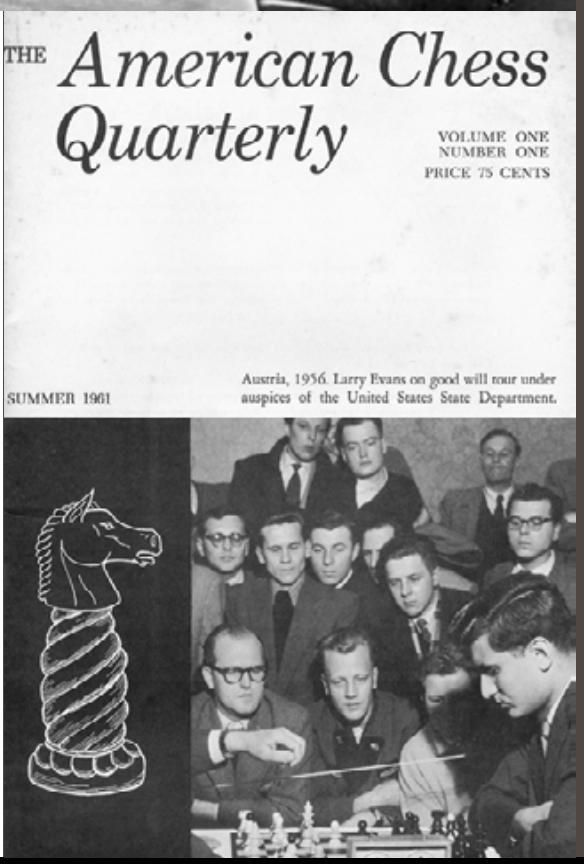
34...♘c2 35.♖d1 a1♕ 36.♖d7+ ♔e8 37.♖e7+
Or 37.f7+ ♔xd7 and the rook on the first rank prevents the pawn from queening – an optical illusion!

37...♔f8 38.♖xh7 ♕f1+ 39.♔g3 ♕f5
White resigned. He is left with a few more checks, but eventually he must bow to Black's material superiority.

Larry followed up with an emphatic victory at the U.S. Championship, where Sammy Reshevsky found himself relegated from 1st place for the first time in fifteen years. At the time, Evans, still only 19, was the youngest ever title holder. Traditionally, in America, this would have led to sponsorship being sought for a match between the old and the new champions. However, Reshevsky was already committed to a contest for the 'Championship of the Free World' against Najdorf and so a match with Evans never happened.

Reshevsky had been absent from the previous championship and it was won by Herman Steiner, originally from Hungary but now the top chess cat in Los Angeles – and indeed

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Austria, 1956. Larry Evans on good will tour under auspices of the United States State Department.

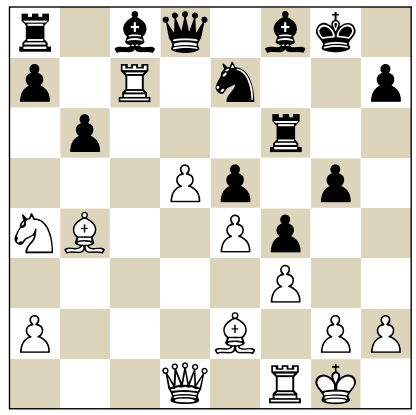
Larry Evans as cover model for various American chess magazines and pictured together with Bobby Fischer in Las Vegas in 1962.

Hollywood. Steiner managed to raise $3,000 to challenge Evans for the title, but in a one-sided match was crushed 10-4.

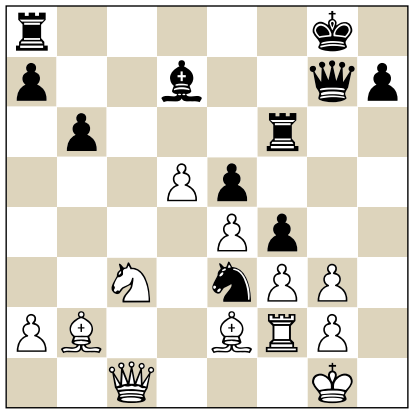
Larry graduated from the City College of New York in 1954 and began to write scripts for stage and screen whilst also managing the Prometheus Film Company. Yet, despite his work commitments, he was still able to come 2nd to Bisguier in the Pan American Congress in Hollywood, finish 1st on tiebreak in the U.S. Open in New Orleans, and score +2 –1 =1 against world championship candidate Taimanov in the USA v USSR match in New York, which the Americans lost 20-12.

KI 2.5 – E98
Mark Taimanov
Larry Evans
New York 1954 (USSR v USA)

(Notes by Larry Evans from his book *Chess Questions Answered*)
The most thrilling game of my career also featured an inspired sacrifice after I walked headlong into a prepared variation against the Soviet champion Mark Taimanov in our rubber game with the score tied at 1½-1½.
Tension rode high. At move 18 he had used only two minutes on the clock, while I had consumed close to an hour!
1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 0-0 5.d4 d6 6.♗e2 e5 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7 9.♘e1 ♘d7 10.♘d3 f5 11.f3 f4 12.♗d2 g5 13.♖c1 ♖f6 14.c5!?
A positional pawn sacrifice. After 14.b4 h5 15.c5 ♖g6, Black has good kingside chances.
14...♘xc5 15.♘xc5 dxc5 16.♘a4 b6 17.b4 cxb4 18.♗xb4 ♗f8
The text was considered a clever trap, but I must confess that White's reply took me completely by surprise. Another playable defence is 18...c5.
19.♖xc7
Objectively better was 19.♕b3 with strong pressure.



I literally broke out into a sweat! The eyes of over a thousand spectators, it seemed, were focused on our wallboard.
It did not take very long to calculate that the upstart rook could not be captured – e.g. not 19...♕xc7? 20.d6 ♖xd6 (not 20...♕b7 21.dxe7 ♗xe7 22.♗xe7 ♕xe7 23.♕d5+ ♔h8 followed by 24.♕xa8) 21.♗xd6 and Black has no satisfactory defence to 22.♕b3+ followed by 23.♗xe5 (if 21...♕d7 22.♕b3+ ♕e6? 23.♗c4).
While analysing 19...♘g6 20.d6 ♗xd6 21.♕d5+ ♔h8 (not 21...♗e6? 22.♕xe6+ wins a piece), a startling counterstroke suggested itself:
19...♘f5!!
The knight is headed for e3.
20.♗xf8
Taimanov pondered quite a while on this move, which is best. If 20.exf5 ♕xc7 21.d6 ♕f7 Black remains an exchange ahead and White's f-pawn falls, followed eventually by his d-pawn. Also 20.d6 ♘e3 wins material (21.♕b3+ ♗e6).
20...♕xc7 21.♗a3
White prefers to sacrifice a second exchange rather than ruin his pawn structure by 21.exf5 ♔xf8.
21...♘e3 22.♕c1 ♕g7!
This continuation of the attack poses fewer technical difficulties than the win of further material after 22...♕d7 23.♘c3 ♘xf1. Black's knight is a bastion.
23.♖f2 ♗d7
An ideal developing move, which gains time by an attack on White's misplaced knight.
24.♘c3 g4 25.♗b2 g3 26.hxg3



26...♕xg3 Again Black eschews material gain by 26...fxg3 27.♕xe3 gxf2+, in order to pursue his attack.
27.♗f1 ♖c8 28.♕e1 b5 28...♖h6 29.♖e2 ♕h2+ also wins.
29.♘e2 ♕h4 30.g3 Desperation. Otherwise Black mates after ...♖h6.
30...fxg3 31.♘xg3 ♘xf1 White was hoping to prolong his agony after 31...♕xg3+ 32.♖g2, winning the queen.
32.♘f5 There is no good recapture, so White hopes again to win the queen by ♖g2+.
32...♖g6+ 33.♔xf1 ♕h1+ 34.♔e2 ♖c2+ 35.♔d1 ♕xe1+ 36.♔xe1 ♖g1+
0-1. His king is bracketed by the rooks, and more material must fall after 37.♖f1 ♖xf1+ 38.♔xf1 ♖xb2, etc.
A spectator who had a drink at the bar with Taimanov immediately after the game reported that the Soviet star's lament was: 'What did that little boy do to me?'

In the mid-50s wealthy members of the Manhattan Chess Club established the 'American Chess Foundation', designed to promote and advance the cause of U.S. chess. They began their endeavours by holding a series of Lessing J. Rosenwald tournaments – named after a prominent member of the consortium. In the first of these tournaments, held over the New Year 1954/5, Evans finished second to Reshevsky and marked the event by annotating all the games for his book on the event, *Trophy Chess*. It was a different story in the 2nd Rosenwald tournament, where Evans and Bisguier tied for first ahead of Reshevsky. After staging a few other contests, the ACF successfully took over the running of the U.S. Championship, which had got itself into both financial and organisational difficulties.

In 1956 Evans shared first with Lombardy in the Canadian Open in Montreal, where he first made the acquaintance of Bobby Fischer, barely in his teens and who continuously bombarded him with technical chess questions throughout the long drive back to New York!

Then, surprise, surprise, Larry was invited by the State Department to undertake a goodwill chess tour of Europe to promote U.S.-European relations – an opportunity not to be missed and never to be repeated.

In the meantime his overall performances had not gone unnoticed by FIDE, who in 1957 awarded him the grandmaster title.

In 1958 Evans celebrated his new status by bringing out his most enduring work, *New Ideas in Chess*, which showed how the elements of Pawn Structure, Time, Force and Space interact and can be converted into one another to gain significant advantages. Each page of the book was headed with a maxim such as 'Strike pawn chains at their base', 'When ahead in Force, open lines', 'Restrain key freeing moves' etc., which made Evans' methods both easy to understand and remember, thus providing practical guidance for competitive players.

Meanwhile Evans carried on with his playing career by winning the U.S. Open in Rochester and scoring 11½/16 for the U.S. team at the Munich Olympiad. Then, during the New Year period, he placed 4th in the U.S. Championship, now under the management of the ACF and with a new champion – 15-year-old Bobby Fischer.

Evans adhered to a similar chess playing routine over the next twenty years. He continued to compete in a variety of Opens, U.S. Championships, Olympiads and the occasional international tournament.

For example, at a very strong tournament in Buenos Aires in 1960 he performed excellently, finishing shared 4th behind the joint winners Kortchnoi and Reshevsky – whom he defeated in their individual game. Larry tells a story about this particular encounter in *This Crazy World Of Chess*, published in 2007, which is actually a potpourri of his best writings from later life and does not shy away even from intrigues, scandals, and dodgy dealings. Here, while mentioning the book *The Bobby Fischer I Knew And Other Stories*, he quotes the author Arnold Denker: 'I scored 4½-½ in the 1942 U.S. Championship and met Sammy Reshevsky in round six. It featured my maddest time scramble and his flag fell on move 45 or so. L.Walter rushed up, grabbed the clock from behind, turned it around so the dial was on my side and without the slightest hesitation forfeited... me!'

After which Evans continues: 'Curious, I asked Denker what Sammy did after the referee made this mistake. "I asked Sammy why didn't he say something? He said, "'It's not my decision'" and zoomed out. We weren't friends for years after but finally made up when our team went to Moscow in 1946". Much later, at Buenos Aires in 1960, Reshevsky overstepped on time against me and started to protest about his defective clock. With the forfeit safely tucked in my pocket, I took a leaf from Sammy's book and vanished from the playing hall in case the decision was reversed on appeal. In a way I was paying him back for what he did to Denker.'

Evans had a number of international tournament successes: fourth, behind Smyslov, Uhlmann and Taimanov, in the Capablanca Memorial in Havana 1964, second in Venice 1967 (trailing Donner, but level with World Champion Petrosian who wondered why such a strong player didn't play in more international tournaments!), 6th in San Antonio 1972 (where he defeated the legendary Paul Keres), and first in Portimao 1975.

He was also a consistently good per-

former in the U.S. Championships, winning in 1961/62 (when neither Fischer nor Reshevsky were competing), 1968 and 1981 (where he came in as a late reserve for Kavalek and tied for 1st with Browne and Christiansen). His second place to Fischer in 1963-64, where Bobby scored 11/11, led the arbiter Hans Kmoch to quip that Fischer had won the exhibition, and Evans the championship – Larry's 7½ points usually being enough to secure the title!

Larry had been writing articles in *Chess Review* and *Chess Life* since the 50s, but from 1961-65 he also produced his own high quality magazine *American Chess Quarterly*. Contributors, in addition to himself, included Edward Lasker, Arthur Bisguier, William Lombardy and Fred Wren, a wonderful writer whose target audience was ... the unknown woodpusher! Consulting editor was none less than Bobby Fischer, who provided games, annotations and analysis, such as his famous *A Bust to the King's Gambit* – which, however, couldn't have been that good as three years later, in his record-breaking 11-0 U.S. Championship win, he beat Evans ... with the selfsame King's Gambit!

Incidentally, when Bobby went on a major exhibition tour in 1964, Larry's father, who had an office in New York, offered to serve as his manager – and without asking for a penny. When Mr. Evans passed away, in 1978, Bobby wrote a warm letter on his birthday offering his sincerest condolences: '... I was very sorry when I heard he died. His personality was a unique combination of brains, guts, dedication, perseverance, generosity, humour, steadfastness, heart, shrewdness, honesty, loyalty etc. etc. And to offset all these fine traits he was incredibly self effacing, and the last thing he wanted was to steal someone else's thunder...' Incidentally, a copy of the original letter appears in the beautiful coffee table book *Bobby Fischer Uncensored*

Taimanov's lament was: 'What did that little boy do to me?'

in which David DeLucia puts on display his fabulous collection of Fischer memorabilia.

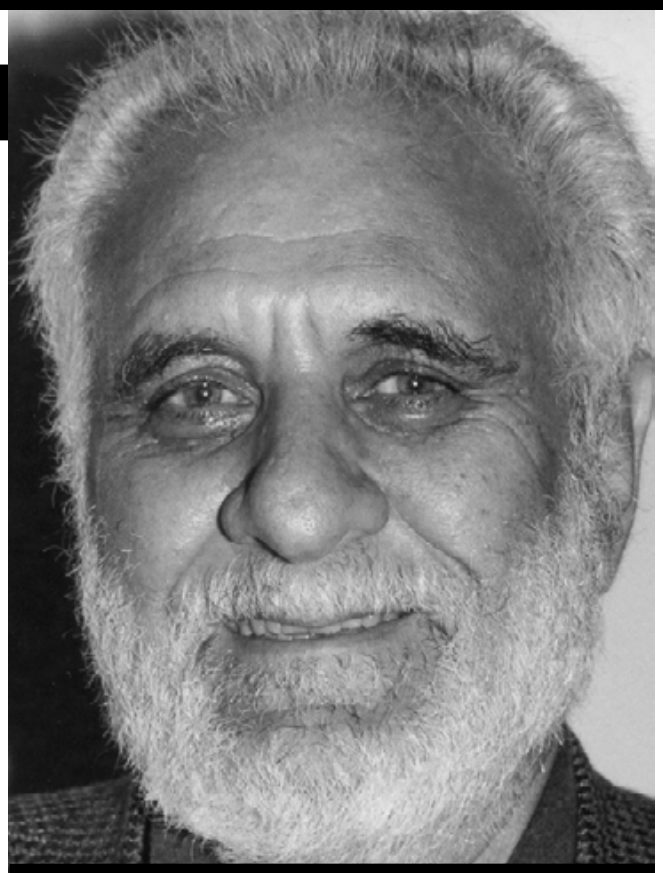
In addition to working regularly on his quarterly magazine, Larry was also in the process of revising *Modern Chess Openings* – a mammoth task in those pre-computer days. His respected and greatly expanded '10th edition', published in 1965, retained the familiar format whilst updating and upgrading the selected lines of play. In this way he kept alive hopes that new editions of this 'chess bible' would continue to appear and, indeed, U.S. grandmaster Nick de Firmian is currently maintaining the tradition which demands that all the chess openings are contained in a single volume.

Also, during this period, Evans was helping Fischer with what was originally supposed to be *My 50 Memorable Games*. Bobby expected to win the Candidates' tournament in Curaçao 1962 and then capture the world title by defeating Botvinnik – and his book was intended to coincide with this great achievement. However, things did not go as planned and consequently the manuscript languished in the shadows for years. Evans explained how, after receiving the proofs, Fischer had second thoughts about revealing his analysis. He even went so far as scratching out all the annotations and, when this was rejected by the publisher, returning his advance. However, a combination of perseverance, patience and persuasion enabled Evans finally to see the book through to publication – five years and ten extra games later. After Bobby's death in 2008, he told *Newsweek*: 'Getting those details out of him was like pulling teeth – he didn't want to give away his secrets. I'd say, "Well, if he makes this move, then what do you do?" I scribbled it all down and tried to be as faithful to his words as I could.'

When asked about his personal relationship with Bobby, Larry replied that he felt like the Jedediah Leland character in *Citizen Kane* who said of his boss: 'Maybe I wasn't his friend, but if I wasn't he never had one.' This is sad, but not as bad as the gun-toting stranger portrayed by Clint Eastwood, of whom it was said: 'He's got no friends and all his enemies are dead'.

Anyway, in the meantime Evans' own book *New Ideas In Chess* was going through a number of editions. However I noticed over the years that the dedication at the front 'To Clementine. Here is a book for you to learn from when I'm not there to lose my temper' had progressively changed, edition to edition, from 'Clementine' to 'Anne' to 'Ingrid'. When I suggested to Larry that this was a sensitive matter and could get him into trouble, he replied in his customary self-assured way: 'A man's got the right to change his mind!' We might also mention that his very first book on Vienna 1922 was dedicated to the chess muse 'Caissa', a safe bet, but the later *Trophy Chess* had a certain 'Magdalene' as the honoured lady...

His later books *Modern Chess Bril-*



Larry Evans in 2000, photographed by Mark Huba at the Kasparov-Kramnik match in London.

liances (1970) and *Chess Questions Answered* (1971) indicated that he had now well and truly settled down – both were dedicated to Ingrid! Final confirmation, as if it were needed, came when Bobby asked Larry to be his second in his world title match against Spassky, but stipulated he was not to bring his wife along. 'Good luck and good bye', was Larry's unambiguous response.

Incidentally, after marrying Ingrid Hamann, an artist and photographer, in 1968, he had moved from Las Vegas to Reno, where for a while he made good money in the gaming houses, thanks to his ability to memorise the pack – so-called 'card counting'. But inevitably, in time, casino after casino banned him from their tables...

Paradoxically, in his 'complete repertoire' book *The Chess Opening For You* (1975), advocating the King's Indian Attack for White and the King's Indian Defence and Centre Counter for Black, Larry makes a confession: 'I have a terrible memory and can't give you a game I played a month ago without consulting a score. Nor do I try to memorise moves in the opening.' All of which reminds me of an old story about Richard Réti, who, after completing a 20-board blindfold simultaneous exhibition, headed for the door quite oblivious to the fact that he had left behind his briefcase. However a bright-eyed boy noticed what was happening, picked it up and rushed over to the departing grandmaster with the words: 'Mr. Réti, you have forgotten your briefcase' ... to which the grateful reply was: 'Oh, thank you so much, young man, I have an awful memory!'

As it turned out, *Modern Chess Brilliancies*, published by Simon and Schuster, proved to be another well received book. However, when it was transcribed into algebraic notation and reprinted in the 90s, the new publisher failed to spot an analytical error given in the original edition which left two kings simultaneously in check. This occurred in an annotation to move 35 of the game Fischer-Bolbochan – despite

'Captain Evans discovered the Gambit in 1824 and has been living off my reputation ever since!'

the fact that Larry had paid Bobby a fee of $100 to check the proofs! However the mistake was not present in the authorised version of *My 60 Memorable Games*, where the Fischer-Bolbochan encounter was also annotated, but it did resurface in the algebraicised Batsford version by John Nunn and Graham Burgess, who astonishingly introduced the same illegal 'double check' – which incidentally had first been pointed out by American chess writer Irving Chernev way back in the 70s.

In his late thirties it seemed that Larry was reviewing his career and looking at competitive chess from a different perspective. Once, in response to an assertion that chess is a way of life, an art, a worthy profession and so on... he responded uncharacteristically negatively: 'Ridiculous! Chess is an escape, nothing more. I learned chess as a boy to get away from life. When everybody else was enjoying life, I was playing chess. Now that I've matured I don't need to escape any more.' And he concluded by saying that 'chess is my bread and butter'.

Well, indeed, so it was. In 1971 he acquired a newspaper column which provided him with a regular income, so he would no longer be so dependent on prize money from tournament play or irregular payments of book royalties. He started writing syndicated articles under the banner of *Evans On Chess* which appeared in some 50 American newspapers, such as *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Denver Post*, *The Boston Herald Traveler* and *The Washington Star-News*, etc., etc. His articles, reaching millions of readers, encompassed a wide range of chess topics, including games, events, general tips, problems, lore, politics, tactical quizzes, humour, scandal, curiosities and of course ... Bobby Fischer. The first 122 columns were gathered together in *Evans On Chess*, published in 1974. This was followed almost ten years later by a further collection, *The Chess Beat*, which covered the period 1973-1981. Three years ago a selection of his post-2000 writings appeared in *This Crazy World Of Chess*, so there is a 20 year span which remains unpublished in book form. Since Larry said 'I hope you enjoy these columns as much as I enjoy writing them' it seems he found an ideal alternative to playing chess in writing about the game instead – which in fact he did for 60 years!

Larry also had a monthly Questions and Answers column in *Chess Life*, where readers were invited to write in with any kind of chess-related queries – which he would endeavour to respond to in the pages of the magazine. These ranged from the deeply analytical to the deeply personal and brought out many hitherto unknown facts. For example, a sizeable collection of readers'

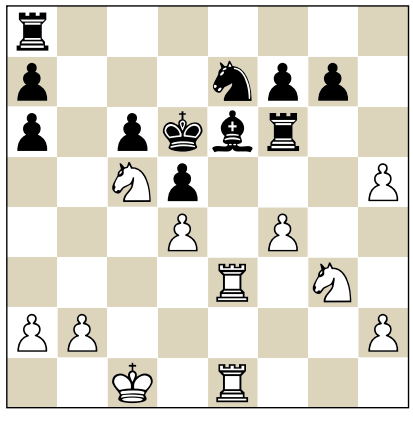
corrections to Fine's classic *Basic Chess Endings* was even published later on as a separate booklet! Larry's humour was always in evidence, as in his 'Gentle Glossary' which included: *Professional Chess Player*: One who cannot make a living by playing chess, *Fool's Mate*: A chess player's spouse, *Sacrifice*: Any piece left en prise. *J'adoube*: French for 'What am I doing? If I move that piece I'm lost!'

In the chess boom following in the wake of Fischer-Spassky, Reykjavik 1972, Evans wrote a 'move by move' best-seller on the match, jointly with Ken Smith, a chess-loving Texan who worked in the construction business but also ran *Chess Digest*, an opening theory magazine. In addition, Smith produced opening books and Larry subsequently wrote a number of monographs for him on open games. This included one on the Evans Gambit about which he joked: 'Captain Evans discovered the Gambit in 1824 and has been living off my reputation ever since!' We might add that Larry's forefathers, like the good sea captain, were Welsh.

Situated roughly midway between Reno and Los Angeles, in California but on the east side of the Sierra Nevada mountains, lies a small and isolated town, Lone Pine. Here, a wealthy retired engineer and inventor, Louis Statham, had set up home after selling his mansion in Holmby Hills to *Playboy* boss Hugh Hefner. Mr. Statham liked chess and chess players and from 1971-1981 staged a series of very strong, but also very sociable Swiss tournaments, paying the expenses of visiting grandmasters and offering rich prizes to further encourage their participation. Evans played seven times in Lone Pine, winning in 1971 and picking up thousands of dollars in prize money over the years.

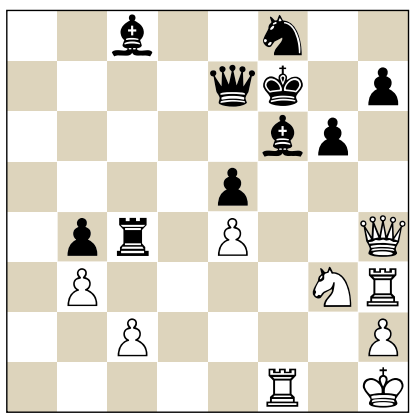
Here are two positions from games he played at Lone Pine, which illustrate his style. Larry greatly appreciated beauty in chess: 'Chess slays boredom and exhilarates the spirit. You're always thinking, always in present time. You know you're alive. You're always being challenged and threatened. There is no social purpose, only the joy of trying to create a pocket of beauty in a noisy world', he wrote in one of his columns.

And here, in accordance with his own theories as expounded in *New Ideas in Chess*, we can see how elegantly he converts superior pawn structure into space and then force – finally transposing into a winning endgame.



Larry Evans - Pal Benko
Lone Pine 1975

24.f5! ♘xf5 25.♖xe6+! fxe6 26.♖xe6+ ♖xe6 27.♘xf5+ ♔c7 28.♘xe6+ ♔d7 29.♘exg7 ♖c8 30.h6 a5 31.♔d2 a4 32.h4 a5 33.♔e3 ♖b8 34.♔f4 ♖xb2 35.h7 ♖b8 36.♔g5 1-0. The black king cannot approach the kingside, so the knights and king will force through a promotion of the h-pawn while preventing any last-ditch attempt by Black to queen his d-pawn.



William Goichberg - Larry Evans
Lone Pine 1972

Larry was also a staunch defender of bad positions and he won many a game with a surprising counterpunch.

30.♕xh7+?

White should win after 30.bxc4 ♗xh3 31.♕xh3 ♔g8 32.♕c8 ♗g7 33.c5.

30...♔e8!!

A surprising retort – refusing the queen offer! Indeed there is little hope after 30...♘xh7 31.♖xh7+ ♔e6 32.♖xe7+ ♗xe7 33.bxc4.

31.♕xe7+ ♗xe7 32.bxc4 ♗xh3 33.♖a1 ♗e6 34.♘f1 ♗xc4

And *Black* won.

'I never give up in an inferior position. Most players do', said Evans.

In 1981 Evans made a rather sad final appearance in the U.S. Championship, losing his first two games and then withdrawing. He did not play very much after that, although in 1988, now 56, he was invited to the Watson, Farley & Williams tournament in London, where he did badly, losing to five young and ambitious future British grandmasters.

However, afterwards, he had still not lost his wit: 'There is still hope for me yet – at the same age as I am now, Emanuel Lasker won the New York 1924 tournament!'

A couple of years later he declared himself retired from active play and henceforth concentrated on chess journalism, lecturing and giving simultaneous exhibitions.

Ray Keene invited Larry over to London as commentator for the 1993 Kasparov-Short and 2000 Kasparov-Kramnik World Championship matches. When you listened to him analysing positions, speaking in his soft American accent, you could clearly identify the man who wrote *New Ideas In Chess* – he really did stick to the principles he had proclaimed 40 years previously.

He also appeared on an excellent British television documentary about the rivalry between Fischer and Spassky, where he made his famous comment on Bobby: 'I probably had more influence on him than anyone – and that was exactly zero!' ■

Charles Hertan

Forcing Moves

The Well-Balanced Warrior

During a chess game, there is no red light that flashes the words, 'OK, time for a tactical solution!' Most practical dilemmas are not solved by the sacrificial brilliancies that fill up traditional tactics manuals. Those are great and lots of fun, but shouldn't we also study the less flashy 'bread and butter' tactics that allow masters to convert a positional edge or ward off a dangerous attack, for example?

Good calculation underlies strong play from the early opening to the 'simplest' ending, from quiet positions to the wildest tactical melee.

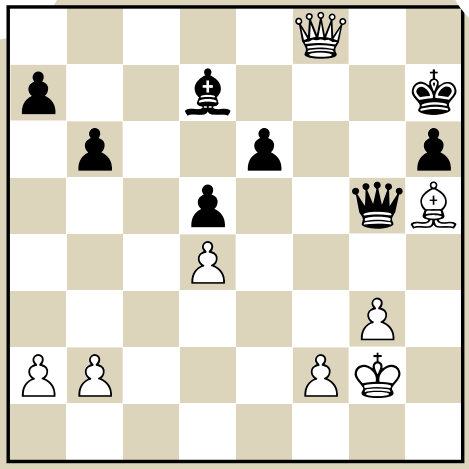
The well-balanced warrior must strive to hone his tactical vision in every situation, so we will visit the quiet shoals of technique as well as the attacker's tsunami.

For each problem, the goal is to find the quickest and clearest winning line for whoever is on the move, unless otherwise noted. A 'winning line' could range from checkmate to being a clear pawn up with no objective compensation for the opponent.

Level of difficulty:
1-4 stars, 1 is 'easiest' and 4 'most difficult'.
The star rating refers to the difficulty of finding all the relevant variations, not just finding the right key move.

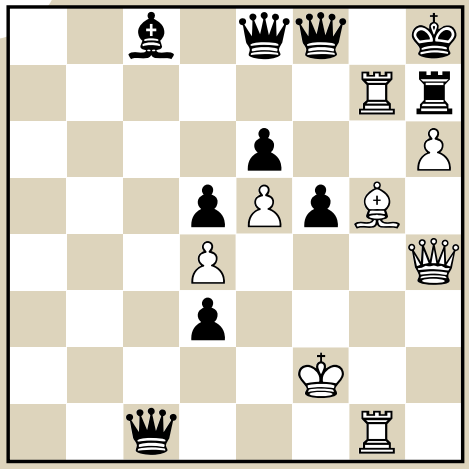
Solutions on page 92

1 ★★★☆



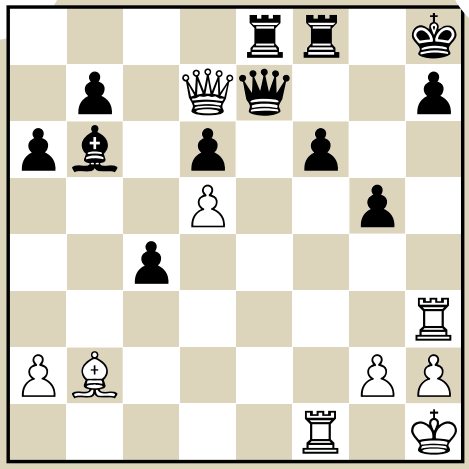
Dance a little victory jig
White to play and win

2 ★★★★



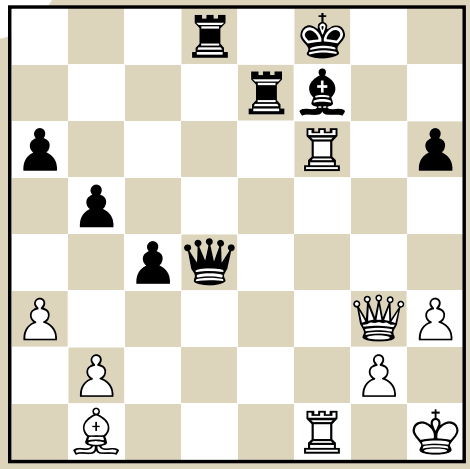
Three bad queens
White to play and win

3 ★★★☆



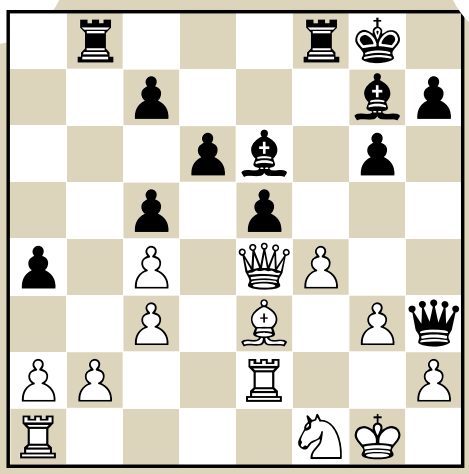
Refute Black's 'only move'
White to play and win

4 ★★½☆



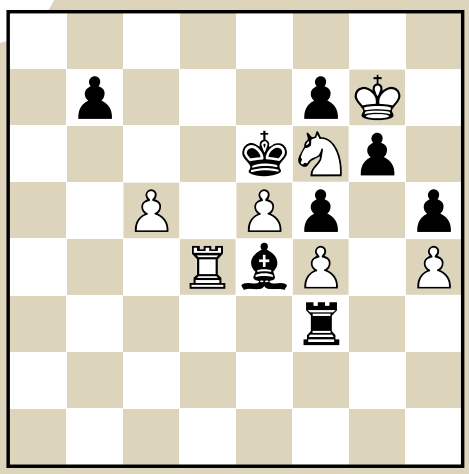
Another disappearing US champion
White to play and win

5 ★★★☆



Cash in your trumps
Black to play and win

6 ★★½☆



Technique, son
White to play and win

Jan Timman

Double punishment in London

The Bilbao scoring system comes straight from top football. I don't think it will be around for long.

A curious thing; years ago the knock-out system was introduced. It was borrowed from tennis, and the idea – if I understood it right – was to make chess more transparent and exciting. In the meantime, almost everyone has realized that the tournaments involved are in fact fairly boring and unclear. Now that knock-out tournaments have virtually disappeared from the scene, a new attempt has been made to copy the rules of another popular sport: the Bilbao scoring system comes straight from top football. I don't think it will be around for long.

Let me start by saying that I am all for trying to encourage the players' fighting spirit. It would have been great if the Sofia Rules had been in force during the final decades of the previous century. How many top tournaments would not have gained added substance! And this is still true: in the Super Final of the Russian championship and in Reggio Emilia, the rule was not used, with the result that a number of short draws crept in.

The only problem with the Sofia Rules is that the players can spin out a theoretical line that will end in move repetition. A selective invitational policy might be a remedy, but in Bilbao and London they had come up with something else: give the winner three points and the drawmaker one. Then no one will be tempted to freewheel.

The problem with this system is that the player who just misses a win is doubly punished. He has acted impeccably in line with the rules of the organizing committee, playing to win from the very start. Then he makes a mistake and loses. This situation clearly contains an element of injustice.

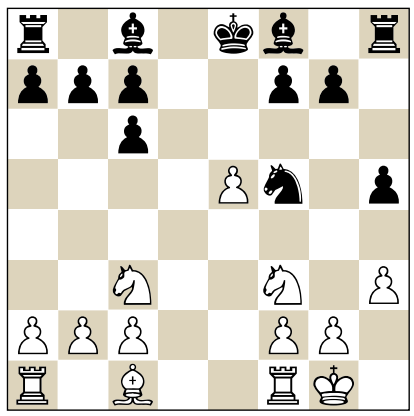
During the recent London tournament this double punishment strongly affected Kramnik, although by some whim of fate it didn't make any difference to his eventual place in the rankings. Against McShane and Carlsen he played model games in which – probably due to tiredness – he missed the win. The game against McShane was particularly impressive. A bishop pair that started out quite modestly was reforged into a mighty weapon.

RL 7.4 – C67
Luke McShane
Vladimir Kramnik
London 2010 (3)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6
No Petroff this time. Kramnik's tough experience in Moscow was still fresh in his mind.

3.♗b5 ♘f6 4.0-0 ♘xe4 5.d4 ♘d6
It is no more than appropriate that precisely in London Kramnik returns to the Berlin Wall, the defensive weapon he had used to withstand Kasparov ten years ago.

6.♗xc6 dxc6 7.dxe5 ♘f5 8.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 9.♘c3 ♔e8 10.h3 h5
This move was often played by the Russian master Gorbatov in the early 1990s. Later Miles played it off and on, but it didn't really take off until late 2008, when Alekseev used it to make an easy draw against Leko. Interestingly enough, by the way, 10... a5 is an important alternative. What other opening variation contains a position in which Black can choose between advancing either one of his outside pawns? This is to do with one of the main characteristics of the Berlin Wall: because Black can no longer castle and his king has little elbow room, it will be difficult to connect the rooks, which is why Black often tries to deploy his rooks via the a- and h-files. The other point of the text is that Black will be able to maintain his knight on f5 for the foreseeable future.

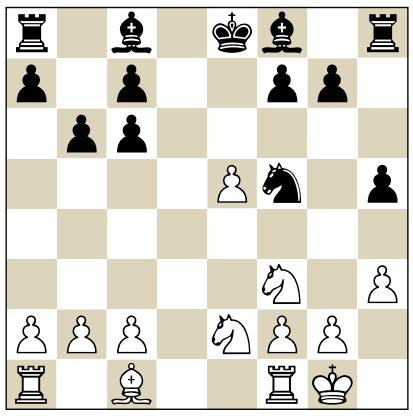


11.♘e2
An important alternative is 11.♗g5, also played by Leko, when Black can go 11...♗e6, but also 11...♗e7. The latter move looks strategically strange, but is justified by the situation. After the swap of the dark-squared bishops square e7 becomes available to the black king, allowing Black to connect his rooks.

Jan Timman

The idea of the text is to possibly take the knights to the vital squares f4 and g5.

11...b6



A new move. Black wants to fianchetto his queen's bishop as soon as possible and postpones the development of his king's bishop. The usual move is 11...♗e7.

12.♗f4

It seems to me that this bishop move is insufficient for an opening advantage. I think that 12.♖e1 is a stronger option, followed by a knight jump to f4. It would be interesting to know how Kramnik would have reacted to this.

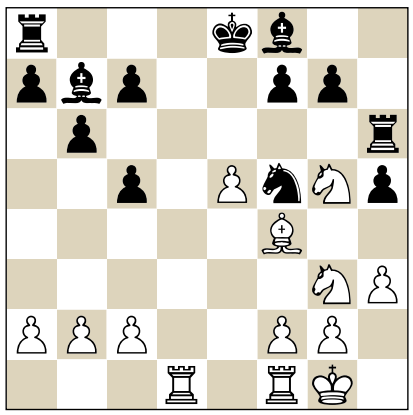
12...c5

Accurate play. 12...♗b7 could be met by 13.♘ed4, after which White would retain some pressure.

13.♖ad1 ♗b7 14.♘g5 ♖h6!

Kramnik in his element. The king's rook is going to play an active part.

15.♘g3



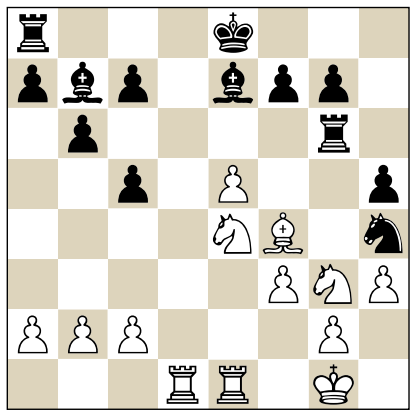
15...♘h4!

Another important finesse. Black takes the initiative on the kingside. After the knight swap there would be little life left in the position.

16.f3 ♗e7 17.♖fe1

More cautious was 17.♖f2 to prevent the coming transaction.

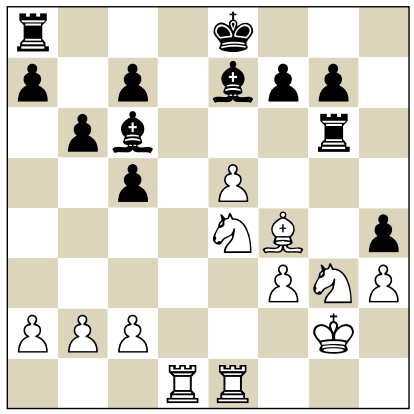
17...♖g6 18.♘5e4



18...♗c6

Great self-control. Black could have captured on either f3 or g2, but in both cases this would give White an annoying check on d6 at some later stage. So Black withdraws his bishop from the firing line, confident that White will be unable to prevent him from capturing on either f3 or g2.

19.♔h2 ♘xg2 20.♔xg2 h4



21.c4

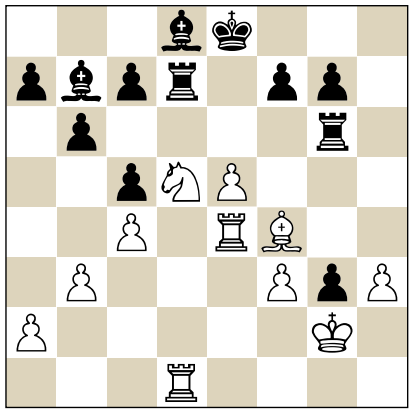
A good counter-measure. For the moment, Black has won the kingside battle, which is why White will try to build as strong as possible a position in the centre.

21...hxg3 22.♘c3 ♖d8 23.♘d5 ♖d7

Black is finally fully mobilized. Now he will start improving his position bit by bit by switching his pieces to more active positions. But for now he continues to manoeuvre on his own territory.

24.b3 ♗d8 25.♖e4 With the clear intention of taking on g3.

25...♗b7



26.♗xg3

According to plan. With square h4 under control he now has no problem winning back the pawn.

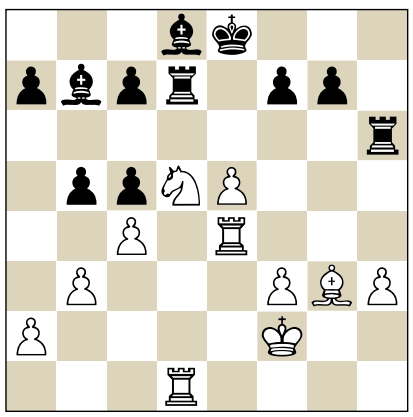
He also had an interesting way to change tack, though. After 26.♖ee1 Black would suddenly be facing the threat of 27.♘f6+, when he probably has nothing better than 26...♗c6, after which White can go for move repetition with 27.♖e4. If Black wants to go for a win then, he can try 27...♔f8, which removes all possibilities of a knight check.

26...b5!

Black is making a break on the queenside, which means that the battle will range all over the board.

27.♔f2 ♖h6

A harmless demonstration, but a successful one.

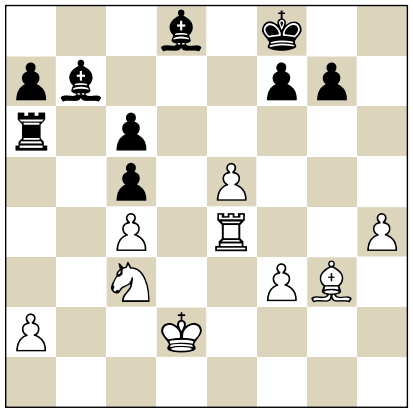


28.h4

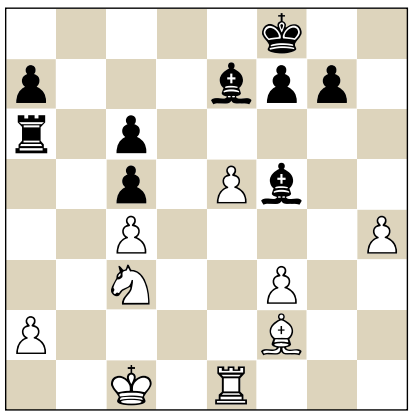
This unnecessarily weakens the white position. After 28.♔g2 Kramnik would probably have repeated moves with 28...♖g6, since after 28...♖a6 29.♖e2 he would have had to reckon with both 30.♘f6+ and 30.♗f2.

28...♔f8 29.♔e2 ♖a6 30.♖d2

bxc4 31.bxc4 c6
Black's queenside action has disrupted the black pawn structure there, but this is not really important. Black is prepared to give up pawn c5 as soon as his bishop pair is functioning optimally. He starts by chasing the white knight from its central position.
32.♘c3 ♖xd2+ 33.♔xd2

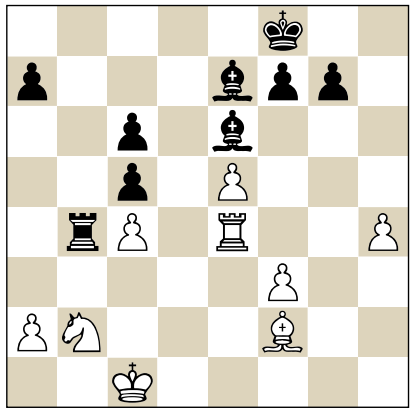


33...♗c8 Just in time. White was threatening to advance his e-pawn.
34.♗f2 ♗e7 35.♖e1
White wants to take his rook to the b-file, but Black can easily thwart this plan. A better defence was 35.♔c1, intending to meet 35...♗f5 with 36.♖e2, when Black will be unable to prevent the white king from becoming active on the b-file, e.g. 36...♗e6 37.♖b2 ♖b6 38.♘e4 ♖b4 39.a3!, and White will survive, since 39...♖xc4+ 40.♔d2 is not good for Black.
35...♗f5 36.♔c1

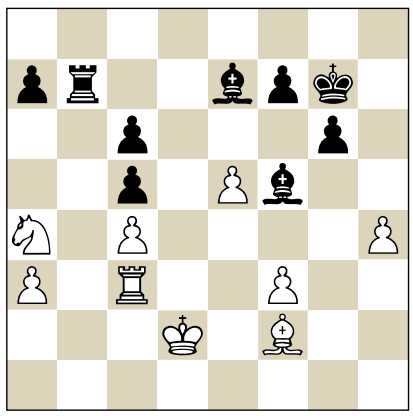


36...♗e6 With 36...♗d3 he could have captured the c-pawn, but then White would activate his rook with 37.♖d1 ♗xc4 38.♖d7. Kramnik takes care to prevent White from developing any kind of counterplay. This was also typical of Karpov's play in his best days.

37.♖e4 ♖b6
This is how Black takes control of the b-file.
38.♘a4 ♖b4 39.♘b2
White has nothing better than this passive defence. After 39.♘xc5 ♗f5 40.a3 ♖b8 41.♖e2 ♖b1+ 42.♔d2 ♖a1 43.a4 ♔g8! (preventing 44.e6) he would be in big trouble.

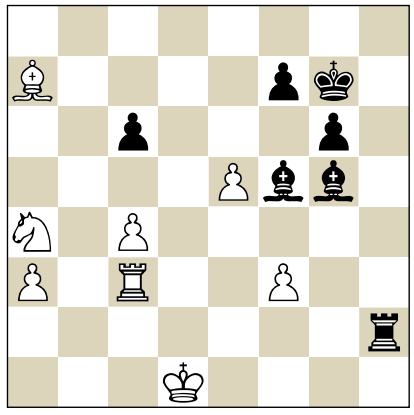


39...g6
A positional finesse just before the time-control. Black fixes the weak h-pawn.
40.a3 ♖b3 41.♖e3 ♖b7
Kramnik patiently manoeuvres on. After forcing the white rook to go to a less favourable square he withdraws his own.
42.♖c3 ♗f5 43.♘a4
White decides to act decisively. With a passive defence Black would have all the time in the world to take his king to h5 in order to capture the white h-pawn.
43...♔g7 44.♔d2

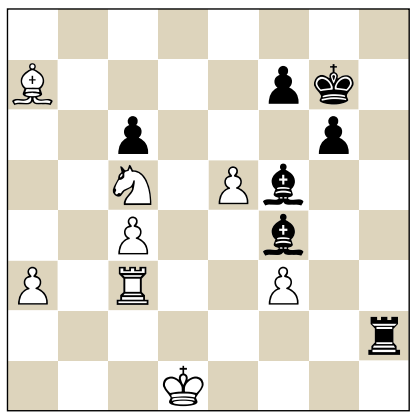


The white king has no safe haven. Given the situation, e2 is the best square for it to sit out the coming skirmishes.
44...♗d8 45.♔e2 ♖b1 46.♗xc5

♗xh4 47.♗xa7 ♖e1+ 48.♔d2 ♖h1
Black has sacrificed a pawn on the queenside in order to put as much pressure as possible on the white position. In order to prevent the threat of 49...♗e1+ White has to withdraw his king.
49.♔e2 ♖e1+ 50.♔d2 ♖h1 51.♔e2 ♖h2+ 52.♔d1 ♗g5



After repeating moves once Black creates new threats against the enemy king. Black, in the meantime, has Horwitz bishops – bishops operating on neighbouring diagonals.
53.♘c5 ♗f4
This is probably inaccurate. Strong was 53...♖d2+ 54.♔e1 ♖a2, after which the white king has no way back, as 55.♔d1 fails to 55...♗d2!, and Black wins an exchange. This means that the white king will have to return to the kingside, after which it will be in an awkward predicament, e.g. 55.♔f1 ♗f4 56.♘d3 ♗h3+ 57.♔g1 ♗h2+ 58.♔h1 ♗g3, and no one would like to defend this position for fun.



54.♘b3
Kramnik must have underestimated this strong defensive move. After 54...♗xe5 White can play 55.♗d4.

Jan Timman

54...g5

Expansion on the kingside. 55.♗d4 would be met strongly by 55...♔g6.

55.♘d4 ♗h3 56.♖c2

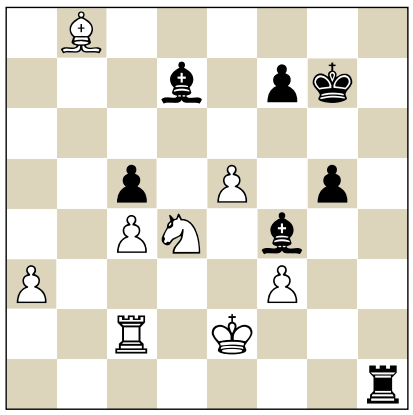
McShane continues to defend as well as he can. With the text he protects the second rank.

The c-pawn, incidentally, was taboo. After 56.♘xc6? ♗d7 Black would win at once.

56...♖h1+ 57.♔e2 ♗d7 58.♗b8

Just before the second time-control, McShane decides to bring the issue to a head. Objectively speaking, 58.a4 was stronger, intending to meet 58...♗xe5 with 59.a5. But then White would have a long and difficult fight ahead of him, whereas the text will almost immediately show him what's what.

58...c5

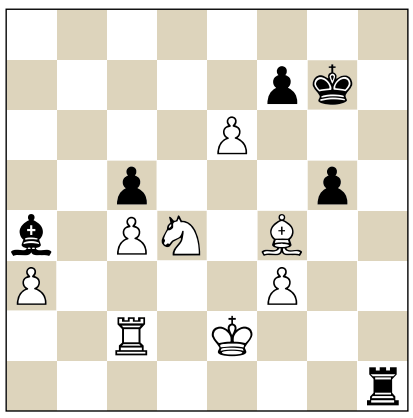


59.e6

A curious case: for dozens of moves, the players had been waging a cautious positional battle, and now the board suddenly erupts in razorsharp complications. At first sight, the situation is quite murky, but it will soon become clear that Black is still calling the shots.

59...♗a4! By attacking the white rook Black is going to win material.

60.♗xf4



60...gxf4

With his last move before the second time-control Black allows the win to slip through his fingers. He should have captured the most valuable piece. This can lead to study-like turns in the game, but they will all end up favouring Black.

The main line goes as follows: 60...♗xc2 61.e7 ♖h8 62.♘e6+ ♔f6! 63.♗e5+ ♔xe5 64.♘f8 ♗a4, and the white passed pawn is stopped.

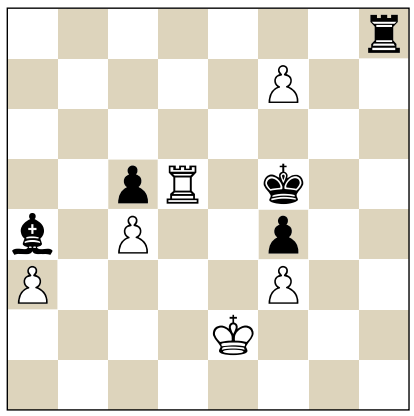
More tenacious is 63.♘xg5, but after 63...♖e8 Black's win is in the bag. Even if all pawns were to disappear from the board, the tablebases still say that the remaining endgame is winning for Black.

In themselves, these are variations that can be calculated fairly easily even with little time on the clock. Kramnik's problem was probably that the text also looked very good, even without any calculations. The rest of the game will show that White will now get serious drawing chances.

61.♘f5+

An important intermediate check.

61...♔f6 62.exf7 ♖h8 63.♖d2 ♔xf5 64.♖d5+



64...♔f6

This error is clearly due to tiredness. Correct was 64...♔e6 in order to meet 65.♖xc5 with 65...♖f8, after which Black will be able to keep his f-pawn. Yet the win remains problematic, because the black rook is tied to the protection of the pawn, while White also has two pawns.

65.♖xc5 ♗c2 66.♖d5 ♔xf7 67.♖d4 ♖h2+

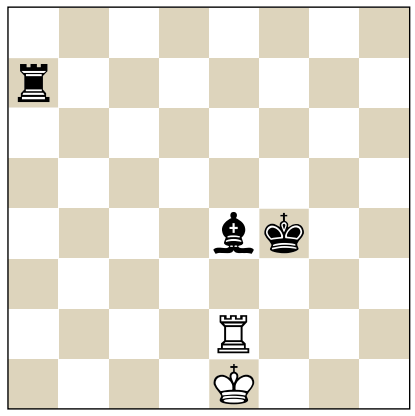
Black will not be able to keep his pawn, so he decides to concentrate on the endgame of rook and bishop against rook. With the text he forces the white king back to the back rank.

68.♔e1 ♔e6 69.♖xf4 ♔e5 70.♖f7 ♔d4 71.♖e7 ♗d3 72.a4 ♖a2 73.a5

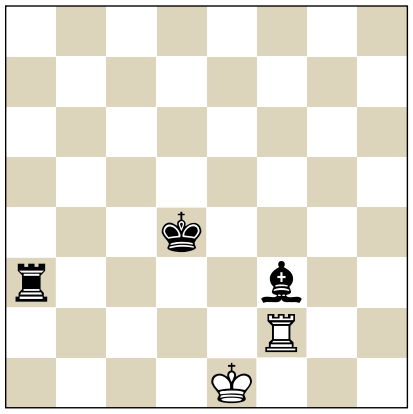
White wants to get rid of his pawns; otherwise Black would be able to invoke the 50-move rule in order to play on even longer.

73...♗xc4 74.♖e4+ ♔d3 75.♖e5 ♔c3 76.♖e7 ♗d3 77.♖e8 ♔d4 78.♖e7 ♗b5 79.♖e4+ ♔d3 80.♖e6 ♗c4 81.♖e5 ♖b2 82.♖e7 ♗b5 83.♖e6 ♖a2 84.♔f1 ♗c4 85.♖e7 ♗d5 86.♖d7 ♔c4 87.♔e1 ♗xf3 88.♖d2 ♖a3 89.a6 ♗d5 90.♖c2+ ♔d3 91.♖d2+ ♔e4 92.♖e2+ ♔f4 93.♔d2 ♗e4 94.a7 ♖a2+ 95.♔e1 ♖xa7

Finally the last pawn has disappeared from the board. In the endgame that now arises the defending player has two drawing plans: Cochrane's method, based on the distant opposition of the rook, and Szen's method, based on second-rank defending by the rook. In this situation, McShane is forced to go for the second method.

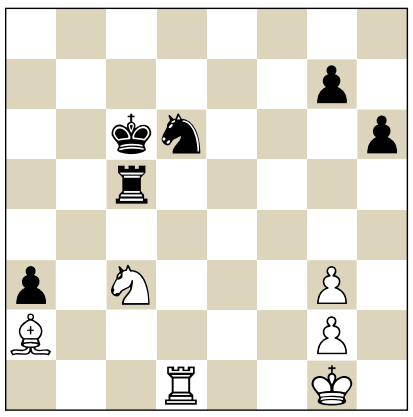


96.♔f2 ♖d7 97.♖b2 ♖d3 98.♖a2 ♖f3+ 99.♔e1 ♖h3 100.♖f2+ ♗f3 101.♖b2 ♖h8 102.♔d2 ♖d8+ 103.♔c3 ♔e3 104.♖b6 ♖c8+ 105.♔b4 ♔d4 106.♖d6+ ♗d5 107.♖b6 ♖c1 108.♖b5 ♗c6 109.♖b6 ♔d5 110.♔a5 ♖a1+ 111.♔b4 ♖a8 112.♔c3 ♔c5 113.♖b2 ♗d5 114.♖f2 ♖a3+ 115.♔d2 ♔d4 116.♖f4+ ♗e4 117.♖f2 ♗f3 118.♔e1



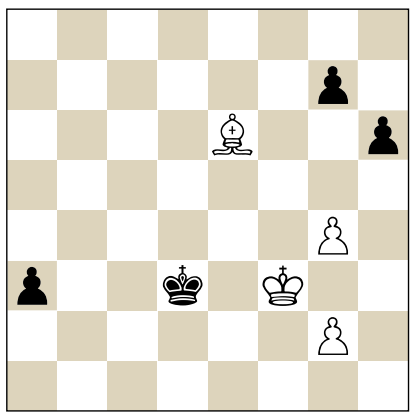
118...♖e3+
The point of Szen's method is that 118...♔e3 is met by 119.♖e2+. Everything is based on this stalemating turn.
119.♔d2 ♖d3+ 120.♔c2 ♔c4 121.♖h2 ♗e4 122.♖e2 ♗f5 123.♔c1 ♖d8 124.♖d2 ♗d3 125.♖f2 ♔c3 126.♖c2+ ♔d4 127.♖b2 ♔e3 128.♖b6 ♖d4 129.♔b2 ♔d2 130.♔a3 ♗c2 131.♖b8 ♔c1 132.♖a8 ♖c4 133.♖a7 ♔d2 134.♖b7 ♖h4 135.♖b6 ♔c1 136.♖a6 ♖c4 137.♖a7 ♔d2 138.♖b7 ♔c3 139.♖b3+ ♗xb3
And Kramnik finally accepts the inevitable. Stalemate.

Against Carlsen, Kramnik missed a great chance.

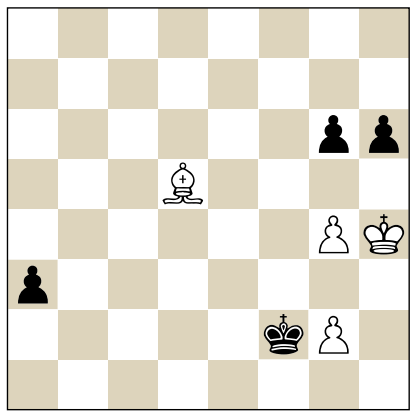


Kramnik-Carlsen
Londen 2010 (6)
position after 61...♖c5

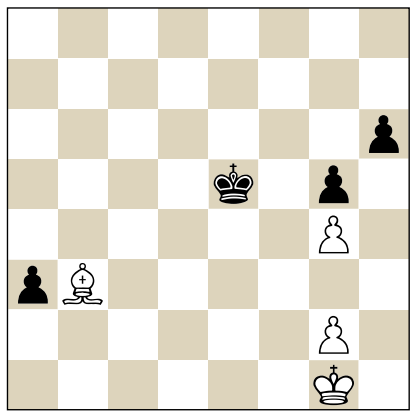
A much-discussed position. White, a piece up, is comfortably winning, of course.
62.♖xd6+
Kramnik decides to liquidate. This decision was criticized from various sides, but this was mainly because so easy.
62...♔xd6 63.♘e4+ ♔c6 64.♘xc5 ♔xc5 65.♔f2 ♔d4 66.♔f3 ♔d3 67.g4 ♔d2 68.♗e6 ♔d3



Black is trying to keep his king in as active a position as possible. It is pointless for it to go to the queenside, as this would give White an easy job in the remaining pawn ending.
69.♔g3?
An incomprehensible error. White voluntarily gives up space, something that is virtually always wrong in elementary endgames. Winning was 69.g5. After 69...hxg5 70.♔g4 ♔e3 71.♔xg5 ♔f2 71.g4 Black will be outtempoed, and White will soon capture both g-pawns.
After 69...♔d4 70.♔f4 the win will not be difficult either.
69...♔e3 Black gratefully accepts the extra space.
70.♔h4 White could still try 70.g5, since 70...hxg5 71.♔g4 would lead to a win again. But Black will play 70...♔e4!, allowing him to maintain his king in its central position. White will not be able to make progress.
70...♔f2 71.♗d5 g6



Shutting down the position.
72.♔h3 g5 73.♔h2 ♔f1 74.♗e6 ♔f2 75.♗c4 ♔e3 76.♔g3 ♔d4 77.♗e6 ♔e3 78.♔h2 ♔f2 79.♗c4 ♔e3 80.♔g1 ♔f4 81.♗e6 ♔e5 82.♗b3 ♔f4 83.♗e6 ♔e5 84.♗b3 ♔f4 85.♗e6 ♔e5 86.♗b3



Draw.

The curious thing is that Carlsen would also have won the tournament if he had lost this game – another consequence of the Bilbao scoring system. But if Kramnik had beaten both McShane and Carlsen, he would have won. ■

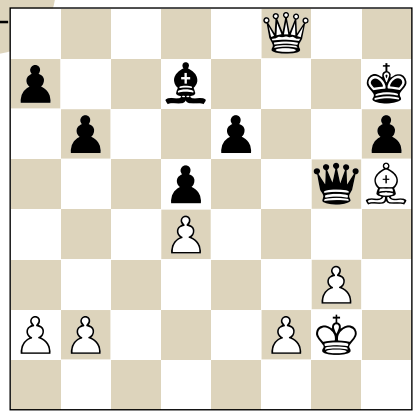
> Such a remark must be part of some psychological warfare. It goes without saying that he would have continued regardless.

Charles Hertan

Forcing Moves

Solutions of page 86

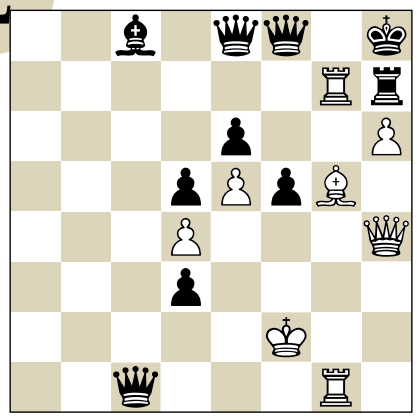
1



Stein-Zhukhovitsky
Moscow 1969

One step back, one forward, Black resigns: **1.♗d1!** Also 1.♗e2. **1...♕c1** If 1...e5 2.♕f7+ or 1...♕g6 2.♕e7+ ♕g7 3.♗c2+ ♔g8 4.♕d8+. **2.♕f7+ ♔h8 3.♗h5!** Back home for good. If 3...♕g5 4.♗g6 or 3...♕c8 4.♕f6+ mates.

2

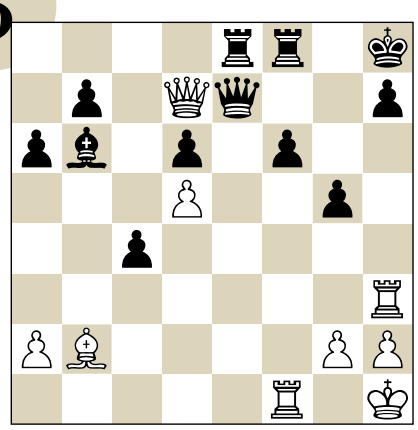


Svetushkin-Salem
Abu Dhabi 2003

White plays a 'practical slow move'. **1.♗xc1 ♕ef7!** This sad deployment seems forced! The dark squares crumble on 1...♕xg7 2.♖xg7 ♖xg7 3.hxg7+ ♔xg7 4.♗h6+ ♔h7 5.♗g5+ ♔g8 6.♗f6 (on 6...♔f8 7.♕h8-h5+ mates). 1...♕ff7? meets 2.♗g5? with 2...♕h5!, but allows simply 2.♖xf7 ♖xf7 3.h7!+−. What about 1...♕d8!? (not 1...♕ee7 2.♕xe7)? Then 2.♖g8+ ♕xg8 3.♖xg8+ ♕xg8 4.♕f6+ ♖g7 5.hxg7+ ♕xg7 6.♕h4+ ♔g8! escapes, so correct is 2.♗g5! ♕a5 and only now 3.♖g8+!! (but not 3.♗f6? ♕d2+ 4.♔g3 ♕xf6! 5.♕xf6 ♕e3+ 6.♔g2 ♕e2+± since White must avoid check on the h-file) 3...♔xg8 4.♗f6+ ♖g7 (4...♕g7 5.♗xg7) 5.hxg7 and White's king finds a safe haven on h2! **2.♗g5 ♕8xg7 3.hxg7+ ♕xg7?** If 3...♔xg7 4.♗h6+. Best was 3...♔g8! 4.♗h6! (not the natural 4.♕xh7+? ♔xh7 5.♗f6 ♕g8! 6.♖h1+ ♔g6 7.♖h8 ♔f7 holding) 4...♗d7! 5.♖a1 ♖xg7, when the cyber-spoiler Rybka 4 says White wins, though flesh-and-blood woodpushers would battle until the rooster crows! Incidentally, the 'bag of bolts' makes a convincing case for the merits of 1.♖xc1! – but space is short. **4.♕f4** Or 4.♗f6 ♖xh4 5.♖xg7. **1-0**.

Wouldn't it be great if White could just ignore the female influence with 1.♖g8+? Nice try, but 1...♔xg8 is a bust: 2.♗f6+? ♕xg1+ or 2.♗xc1+ ♔h8 3.♗g5 ♖f7! 4.h7 ♗a6 and White finally runs out of bullets.

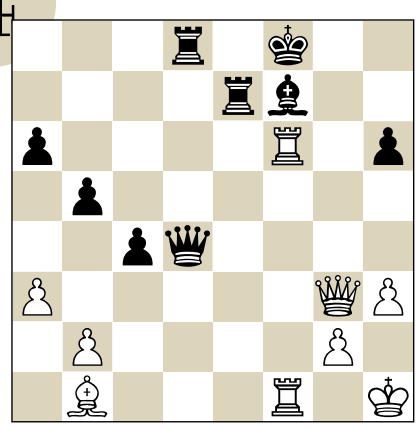
3



Knorre-Bergell
Berlin 1865

1.♖xf6! ♔g8! 1...♕xd7 2.♖xf8 mate, or 1...♕e1+ 2.♖f1+ c3 3.♕xh7 mate looked nice since 2.♖xf8+?? ♖xf8 turns the tables. But Black smelled the coffee and resigned here, sighting the brute force mating sequence. **2.♖g6+! hxg6 3.♖h8+ ♔f7 4.♖h7+ ♔g8 5.♖g7+ ♔h8 6.♖xe7+**

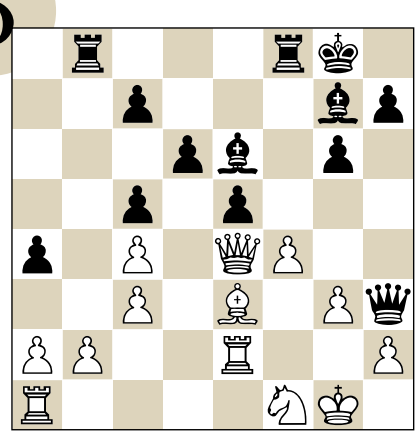
4



Wilder-Larsen
New York 1984

The sad tradition begins with Morphy and Pillsbury, picking up more recently with Fischer, Patrick Wolff, and 1988 champ Michael Wilder: 'American wins everything in sight, then goes crazy, adopts more "respectable" profession, or decides perhaps the commute to *real* European competition is too arduous.' I remember the precocious and funny Mr. Wilder making sharp, quick Sicilian draws with GM Shamkovich at about age 14, but his star burned out within 10 years or so. **1.♗h7! 1-0** suddenly concludes a typically slashing Wilder attack – a common attacking move, but quite rare as a 'quiet' forcing shot! Of course, if 1...♔e8 (to stop mate on g8) 2.♖xf7! etc.

5



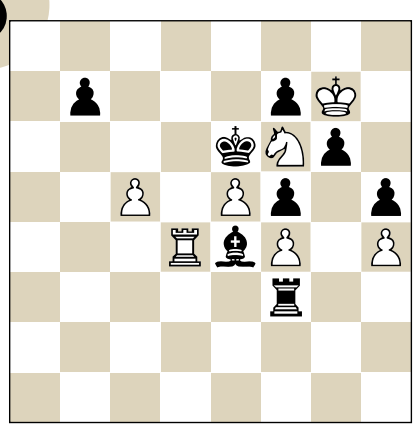
Zhang Pengxiang – Harikrishna
Tiayuan 2005

Beautiful combinations are like rich desserts, but sometimes we must also

Beautiful combinations are like rich desserts, but sometimes we must also eat dinner and wash the dishes!

eat dinner and wash the dishes! Black converts his marvelous bishops and b-file by offering to exchange a key defender: **1...♕f5! 2.♕c6** Black wins a pawn on 2.♕xf5 ♖xf5. **2...♗xc4 3.♖f2 exf4 4.♕xa4** 4.♕xc7 ♗xf1 or 4.♖xf4 ♕e6 5.♖e4 ♗d5. **4...♗b5 5.♕b3+** Or 5.♕xf4 ♕e6 6.♕g5 h6 with an accident on e3. **5...c4 6.♕d1 ♕e4 7.♖xf4 ♖xf4 0-1** (8...♗c6 is convincing enough).

6



Hector-Lutz
Plovdiv 2003

GM Seirawan famously wrote: 'Good technique is good tactics'. Certainly the case here, with White's position so close to slipping away. Possibly time pressure made White bungle the key idea with 1.♔f8?! ♖d3 (1...♖xf4 2.♖d6+ ♔xe5 3.♘xe7 mate) 2.♖d6+ ♖xd6 3.cxd6 ♗c6 4.d7 ♗xd7 5.♘xd7 g5 6.♘c5+ ♔d5 7.fxg5 ♔xc5 8.g6 fxg6 9.e6 1-0, because no less pretty was the accurate endgame forcing sequence **1.♖d6+ ♔e7 2.♖d7+ ♔e6 3.♔f8!** when a second, quicker mate appears: **3...♖xf4 4.♖e7** mate. ■

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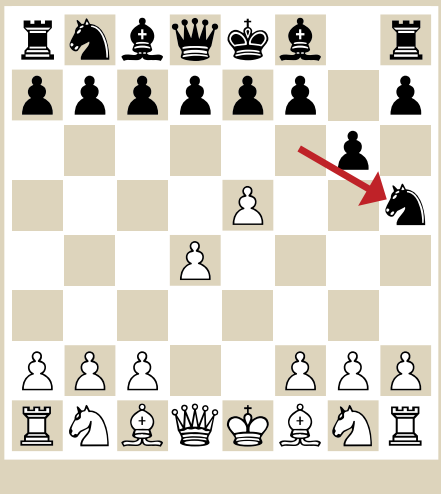
The North Sea Defence

Jeroen Bosch

3...♘h5!?



Magnus Carlsen had a tough time at the Olympiad in Khanty-Mansiysk, losing three of his games and some 15 Elo-points in the process. Some pointed to the experimental mode in which he was playing some of his games as the reason for this failure. Especially his 6th round game against Michael Adams made him vulnerable to such criticism. Employing 1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♘f6 3.e5 ♘h5 will inevitably raise a few eyebrows, but online observers went much further, as did his former coach Garry Kasparov in an interview published on ChessVibes.com: 'I don't approve of this. In fact I think it's almost an insult to play such an opening against someone like Adams, a well-known top player. In my opinion Magnus deserved to lose this game.'

Arguably, the opinion of one of the greatest players in the history of our game is informative on such matters. Kasparov raised the level of chess and the level of opening preparation to a very high degree. His professionalism goes hand in glove with a seriousness, and a feeling of responsibility at how chess ought to be played by top players. Clearly, opening frivolities such as his former pupil is allowing himself here are to be frowned upon. Yet, is it really ethically unsound to direct your knight to the edge of the board at such an early stage against a player who deserves your respect? I find it hard to believe that Carlsen intended to insult Adams. And, observing the players during the game, I did not have the feeling that Adams was motivated by a desire to punish his opponent for his lack of respect. Although, with Adams's low-key exterior this is admittedly hard to gauge.

From another point of view one might also argue that Carlsen had so much respect for his opponent that he saw no chance to outplay him in a 'respectable' opening, and therefore went for something out-of-the box to obtain some chances of playing for a win as Black. Perhaps we could even invoke the spirit of the famous Dutch historian Johan Huizinga and call Magnus Carlsen a true 'Homo Ludens', whose great results in chess are inspired by 'playfulness'. Whenever I see Carlsen's games I am not only impressed by his incredible strength, but also by the fact that, at this awesome height, he still seems capable of improving. If you look at it in this light, then it becomes very sensible to push to the outer limits of what is possible in chess.

Personally, I must confess that this opening idea has been hidden in my file of SOS ideas for many years but so far I had been reluctant to write on it, feeling that it was just a tad too dubious. However, I gave up all resistance after this game: if a 2800+ player can play it and achieve a very decent position against such a strong player as Adams then surely us lesser mortals

can have a go at it sometimes? Meanwhile, Carlsen was certainly not the first strong GM to play in this way. Miles played it a few times, while others gave it an occasional outing, among them: Morozevich, Aronian (in a blindfold game in Amber), Hodgson, Hillarp Persson and Campora.

Interestingly, the idea of 2...♘f6 and 3...♘h5 was devised at approximately the same time (around 1983-1985) by two creative thinkers independently of each other. In the Netherlands Gerard Welling was inspired by Nimzowitsch-Alekhine, New York 1927: 1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.b3 d6 3.g3 e5 4.c4 e4 5.♘h4!? to come up with what he called the Horseshoe Variation. While in Sweden independent thinker Rolf Martens called it the Norwegian Defence. When both of them came to learn of this, Martens re-dubbed the line the North Sea Defence (Gerard Welling, personal communication). Readers who are interested in the ideas of the Swedish opening researcher may consult New In Chess 1999/8, the article 'The unorthodox explorations of Rolf Martens' by Jesper Hall. Those who want to read more on the history of this variation are advised to visit the ChessCafe.com website. In the May 2008 issue of his online column 'Over the Horizons', Stefan Bücker presents a well-balanced and highly informative view of the Norwegian Defence, and for those who want to dig even further his bibliography will come in useful. Now without further ado, let's look at the moves!

Michael Adams
Magnus Carlsen
Khanty-Mansiysk Olympiad 2010

1.e4 g6

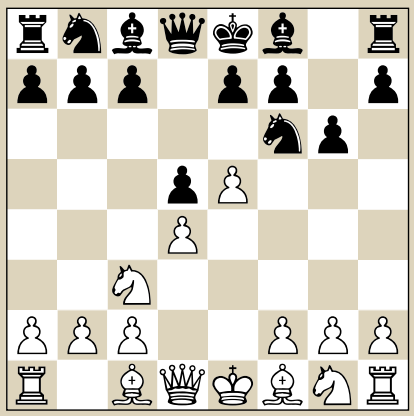
Not nearly as provocative as Tony Miles' 1...a6 versus reigning World Champion Anatoly Karpov at the 1980 European Team Championship in Skara!

2.d4 ♘f6

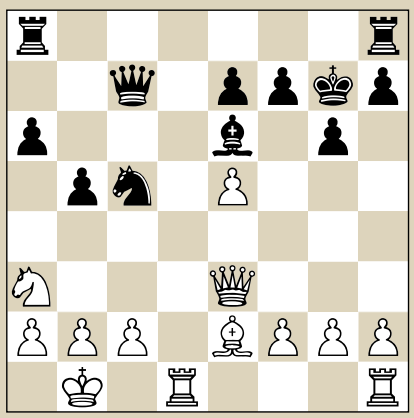
This provokes the advance of the e-pawn, in the spirit of Alekhine's Defence.

3.e5 The only way to 'refute' the North Sea Defence.

3.♘c3 is not very principled, as it allows Black to transpose into the Pirc. However, true Vikings will play 3...d5 (3...d6), when after 4.e5 Black has a choice between 4...♘h5 and 4...♘e4:

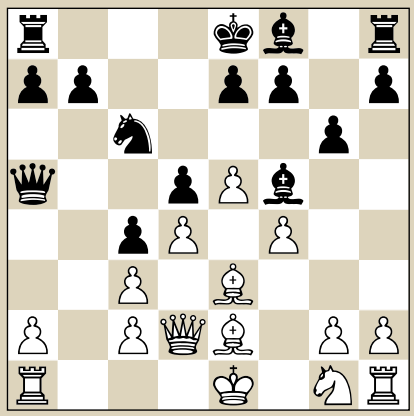


■ 4...♘h5 5.♗e2 ♘g7 6.♗h6 (logical play by White – 6.♘f3 should be met by 6...♗g4, although White must be at least somewhat better; 6.f4 is met by 6...h5 to control the light squares on the kingside) 6...c5?! (Welling later tried to improve his own play with 6...♘f5 7.♗xf8 ♔xf8 8.♘f3 c6 9.♕d2 h5 10.0-0, Tolhuizen-Welling, Eindhoven 1988. I would still prefer White!) 7.dxc5 d4 8.♘b5 ♘c6 9.♘f3 ♘e6 10.♗xf8 ♔xf8 11.♕d2 (11.c3! dxc3 12.♕xd8+ ♘exd8 13.♘xc3, as in Daamen-G.Welling, Eindhoven 1988, is better for White) 11...a6 12.♘a3 ♘xc5 13.0-0-0 ♗e6 14.♔b1 ♔g7 15.♘xd4 ♘xd4 16.♕xd4 ♕c7 17.♕e3 b5



And Black had obvious compensation for the pawn in the stem game Bosboom-Welling, The Netherlands 1987.

■ Personally, I would be less keen on these blocked positions, which is why I would prefer 4...♘e4, when play might continue: 5.♗d3 (5.♘ce2 f6 6.f3 ♘g5; 5.♘xe4 dxe4 6.f3 – 6.♗c4 ♗g7 7.♗e3 c5 8.c3 cxd4 9.cxd4 ♘c6 10.♕d2 0-0 11.♘e2 ♘a5∓ Amberger-Andersen, Esbjerg 2008 – 6...c5 7.d5 ♗g7 is fine for Black, Gunlycke-Crouch, Oxford 2003) 5...♘xc3 6.bxc3 c5 7.f4 ♘c6 8.♗e3 ♕a5 9.♕d2 c4 10.♗e2 ♗f5,

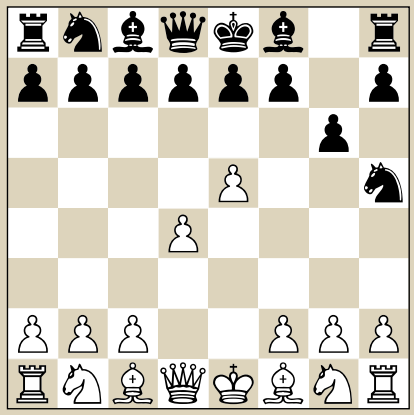


and although the e-pawn hasn't moved, I bet that many players of the French wouldn't mind being Black here, Rabiega-Paulsen, Berlin 2000.

When Aronian confronted Grischuk with the North Sea Defence the Russian copped out with **3.f3**, and after 3...c6!? (3...d5 4.e5 ♘h5; 3...d6) 4.c4 d5 5.e5 ♘fd7 6.♘c3 dxc4 7.♗xc4 ♘b6 8.♗b3 ♘a6 9.♘ge2 ♘c7 10.0-0 ♗e6 11.♗xe6 ♘xe6 12.f4 ♕d7 13.f5 ♘g7 14.e6 fxe6 15.fxg6 0-0-0 it was clear that both players were in a very 'playful' mood that day, Grischuk-Aronian, Monte Carlo (blindfold) 2006.

After **3.♗d3** Black again has the option to go for a Pirc, but principled is 3...d5 4.e5 ♘h5.

3...♘h5

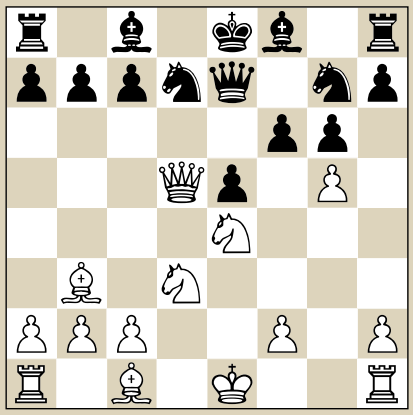


4.♗e2

Most players will opt for this developing move that also attacks the trusty steed.

Jeroen Bosch

– In fact 4.♘f3 may well be stronger (as after 4.♗e2 d6 it turns out that taking the knight gives Black a lot of counterplay). Black has to attack the centre with 4...d6, when I would like to show you the game Hillarp Persson-Andersen, Copenhagen 2010. Remember that Hillarp Persson has also defended the black cause(!): 5.♗c4 (5.♘c3 dxe5 6.♘xe5 – the pawn sacrifice 6.♗e3!? has been suggested by Michiel Wind - see Bücker's ChessCafe.com article for more details – 6...♗g7 looks quite decent for Black) 5...dxe5 (very risky, 5...♘c6 6.♕e2 has been analysed by Hjorth – 6...♗g4 – and Martens – 6...a6. Personally, I would prefer 6...d5, or Bücker's 6...♗g7) 6.♘xe5 e6 7.♕f3 (sacrificing a pawn) 7...f6! 8.♘d3 ♕xd4 9.♗b3 e5 10.♘c3 ♕g4 (Black should keep this resource in reserve with 10...♘c6!? 11.♘b5 ♕d7) White is now better after 11.♕d5! ♕d7 12.g4! ♘g7 13.♘e4 ♕e7 14.g5 ♘d7? (now the mundane 15.gxf6 ♘xf6 16.♗a4+! c6 17.♗xc6+! bxc6 18.♕xc6+ ♔f7 19.♕xa8 wins for White. Possibly Hillarp Persson overlooked that at the end of this line 19...♗b7 fails to 20.♘d6+ ?)

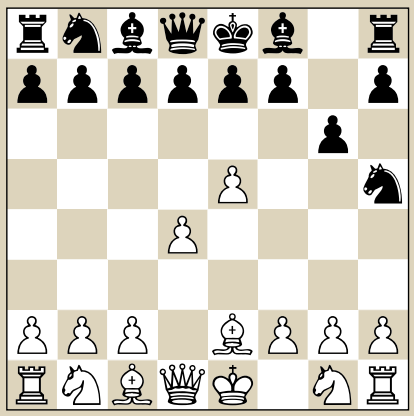


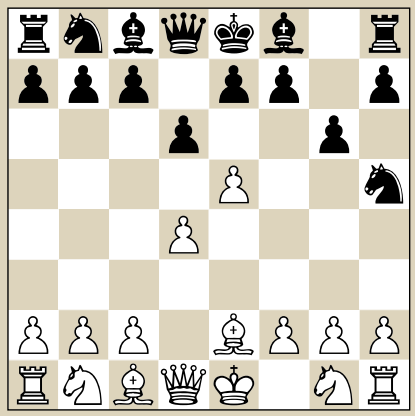
15.♕xd7+ (how to annotate this move? Only a true artist plays in this way!) 15...♔xd7 16.gxf6 ♕e8 17.fxg7? (17.♗g5 followed by a timely f7 favours White) 17...♗xg7 18.♗g5 ♕f8 19.0-0-0 ♔c6 20.♘c3 ♗g4 21.♗a4+ b5! 22.♗xb5+ ♔b7, and Black was completely winning but the game ended in a draw in 106 moves!

– 4.g4?! ♘g7 5.♗h6?! d6 6.♕e2? ♘c6 was clearly better for Black in Hallebeek-Welling, Eindhoven 1988.

– 4.f4 d5! and this is certainly no worse than 1.e4 g6 2.d4 d6 3.♘c3 c6 4.f4 d5 5.e5 h5, which goes back to Gurgenidze's 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 g6 4.e5 ♗g7 5.f4 h5.

– After 4.♗c4 d5 5.♗d3 ♘g7 is logical once you have absorbed Black's way of thinking in this line.





4...d6

Rolf Martens deserves considerable praise for inventing this whole concept. Black immediately puts pressure on White's centre, just like in the Alekhine. Of course, taking on h5 is now crucial for his whole idea. Gerard Welling's philosophical concept behind 2...♘f6 was to fianchetto the knight here – going for a kind of Gurgenidze System.

It must be said that his followers make for an impressive line-up as well: 4...♘g7 5.♘f3 d5 6.h3 (6.c4 c6 7.♘c3 dxc4 8.♗xc4 ♘e6 9.♗e3 ♗g7 10.♕d2 with a very pleasant edge for White in Burmakin-Morozevich, Sochi 2005 – the game ended in a draw) 6...h5 (6...♘e6 7.0-0 ♗g7 8.♗e3 0-0 9.c4 c6 10.♘c3 dxc4 11.♗xc4 was Ferguson-Hodgson, Kilkenny 1999. To my mind, White's play with an early c4 – just as in Burmakin-Morozevich – more or less refutes the set-up with 4...♘g7) 7.0-0 c6 8.b3 a5 9.c4 ♘a6 10.♘c3 ♘c7 11.cxd5!? ♘xd5 12.♘xd5 cxd5 13.♘g5 ♗d7 14.♗d3 ♘e6 15.♕f3! and White was superior in Lautier-Miles, Biel 1996.

5.♘f3

Adams decides that he will not be provoked, undoubtedly after assessing that Black will have considerable compensation after 5.♗xh5 gxh5 6.♕xh5. Indeed, after 6...dxe5 7.♕xe5 (7.dxe5 ♕d5 and Black soon retrieves his pawn: 8.♘f3 – 8.♘e2 ♕xg2 9.♖g1 ♕h3; 8.f3 ♘c6 – 8...♕e4+ 9.♗e3 ♕xc2) 7...♖g8 you will find several

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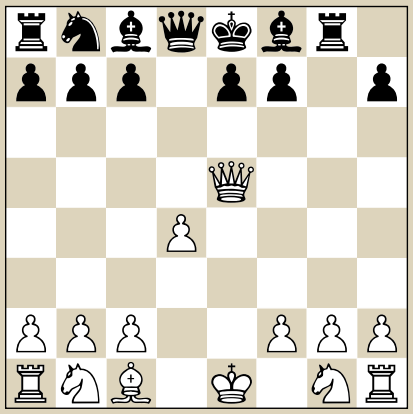
games in your database from this position. White has a pawn, Black has some pressure and an important light-squared bishop.



Hjorth's, very plausible, main line continues 8.♘e2 ♘d7 9.♕d5 c6 10.♕f3 ♘f6 11.h3 (perhaps White may also hope for something after returning the pawn with 11.0-0!? ♗g4 12.♕d3 ♗xe2 13.♕xe2 ♕xd4 14.♘c3) 11...♕a5+ (11...♗e6!?; 11...♕d5!?) and now Bücker is right in claiming an edge for White after 12.♘bc3 ♕f5 13.♘f4! ♕xc2 14.0-0.

Not so popular in practice is 5.f4, an ambitious approach recommended by Stefan Bücker. This certainly looks dangerous for Black.

Hjorth points out that after 5.exd6 cxd6 White can still not profitably take on h5 because of 6.♗xh5 ♕a5+.

5...♘c6 6.exd6

6.0-0 ♗g7 (6...dxe5 7.d5!) 7.exd6 ♕xd6 (7...exd6 would transpose back into the main game after 8.d5 ♘e7 9.c4 0-0 10.♘c3) 8.♘a3 0-0 9.c3 ♘f6 10.♘c4 ♕d8 11.♘fe5 ♘xe5 12.♘xe5 ♗e6 13.♗f3 c6 with near-equality in Taylor-Hillarp Persson, Cobo Bay 2005. Play is similar to the Kengis Variation in the Alekhine (4.♘f3 dxe5 5.♘xe5 g6).

Releasing the tension with something like 6.h3 dxe5 7.dxe5 ♕xd1+ 8.♗xd1, Hagesaether-Andersen, Aarhus 2009, is obviously fine for Black.

6...exd6

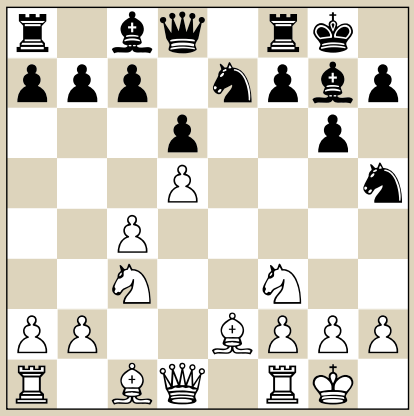
Also playable is 6...♕xd6.

7.d5

Gaining space, White could also continue his development with 7.0-0 ♗g7 8.c4 0-0 9.♘c3.

> It seems that Carlsen's ambition is to blame for the final result, rather than his choice of opening.

7...♘e7 8.c4 ♗g7 9.♘c3 0-0 10.0-0



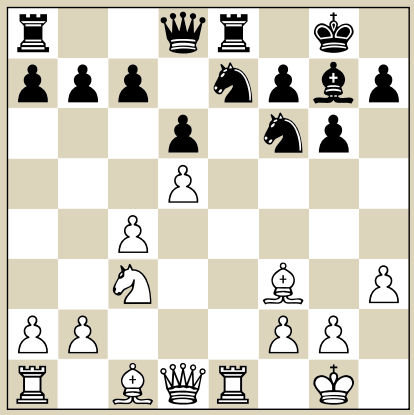
Adams certainly hasn't tried to refute Carlsen's audacious opening choice. Instead, he has settled for a healthy position with perhaps a slight plus for White. On the upside for our Viking: he has a playable position in which there is sufficient play left. I suspect that both players were satisfied here!

10...♗g4

White has a space advantage, so trading pieces is a good idea for Black. What is more, the light-squared bishop has no future anyway (where else to put it but on g4?), and exchanging it for the knight increases Black's central control over the dark squares d4 and e5.

11.♖e1 ♖e8 12.h3 ♗xf3 13.♗xf3 ♘f6

Black has lost some time with ♘g8-f6-h5-f6, but if you just look at the position you will see that this has not resulted in a disadvantage in development. Indeed, after White's next both sides have more or less fully developed and are ready for the middlegame. Black is certainly OK here despite his opening experiment (or is it because of it?).



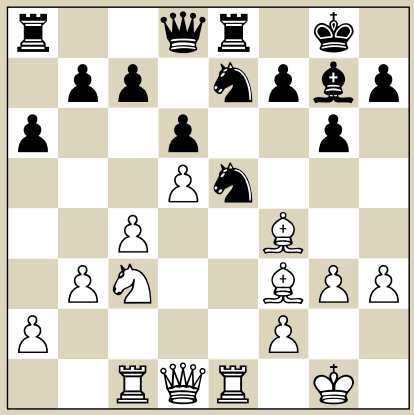
14.♗f4 ♘d7 15.♖c1

Or 15.♕d2 ♘e5 16.♗e2 ♘f5 with decent play.

15...♘e5 16.b3 a6 Here 16...♘xf3+ 17.♕xf3 ♘f5 18.♘e4 h6 (not 18...♕d7 19.♗g5±) would limit White's advantage to a minor edge.

17.g3

17.♗e4 was a decent alternative.



17...♘f5?!

Again avoiding the simplifying 17...♘xf3+ 18.♕xf3 ♘f5 when Black has equal chances. It seems that Carlsen's ambition is to blame for the final result, rather than his choice of opening. Indeed, as Magnus Carlsen wrote

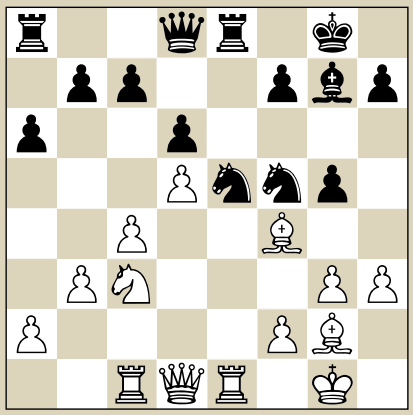
Jeroen Bosch

on his weblog: 'Despite the unusual opening choice I was happy with my position entering the middlegame. Becoming a bit too optimistic I played for a win but underestimated his attack and lost deservedly.'

18.♗g2

Now Adams preserves the bishop, but Carlsen hunts for the other one with the slightly weakening

18...g5?! This very concrete move must have been Carlsen's idea. 18...h6.

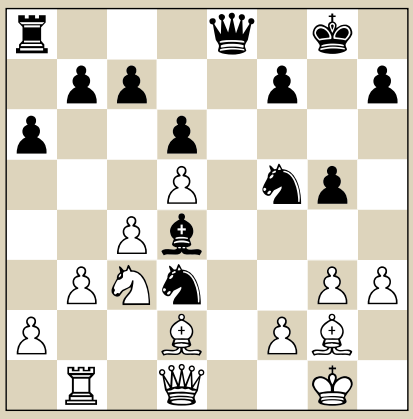


19.♗xe5!

A wise and very practical choice. In the resulting position with bishops of opposite colours the looseness of the pawn on g5 is felt most clearly. Still, play is nearly equal.

Giving the bishop for the other knight equalizes on the spot: 19.♗e3 ♘xe3 20.♖xe3 f5.

Trying to preserve the bishop pair leads to complications after 19.♗d2 ♘d3 20.♖xe8+ ♕xe8 21.♖b1 (not 21.♗xg5 ♘xc1 22.♕xc1 and there is no compensation after 22...♕e5) 21...♗d4.



White can now play for a slight edge with 22.♔h2!?, or go for the unclear 22.♘e4 ♘xg3! 23.♗e3!.

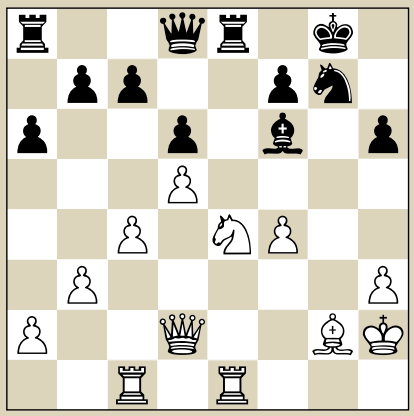
19...♗xe5 20.♘e4 Threatening 21.♕g4 and therefore forcing

20...♘g7 White is now more comfortable because of the pawn on g5.

21.♕d2 h6 22.f4 gxf4 23.gxf4 ♗f6 24.♔h2

24.♘xf6+ ♕xf6 25.♗f3 ♘f5 is certainly not better for White.

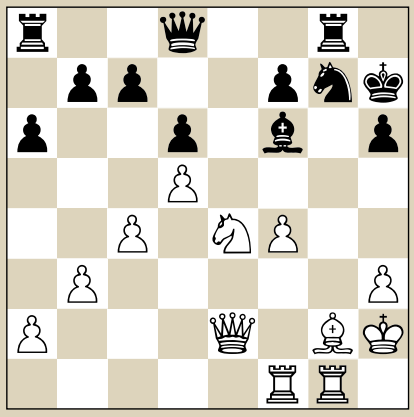
24.♗f3 ♗h4 25.♖e2 f5 and Black is nearly equal.



24...♘h5?!

Carlsen misses the stronger 24...♗h4! 25.♖g1 f5 when 26.♘g3 ♗xg3+ 27.♔xg3 ♘h5+ 28.♔h2 ♔f7 (28...♔h7) 29.♗f3 ♕h4 30.♗xh5+ ♕xh5 should end in a draw.

25.♖g1 ♔h7?! 25...♔h8. **26.♖cf1 ♖g8 27.♕e2 ♘g7**



28.♕d3

Even stronger was 28.♘xf6+! ♕xf6 29.♗e4+ ♔h8 30.♗b1! to set up a well-known battery along the b1-h7 diagonal.

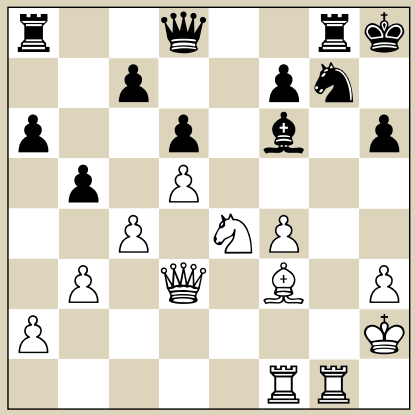
28...♔h8 29.♗f3

This is a terrible position for Black.

29...b5

29...♘f5 30.♘g5 hxg5 31.♕xf5 ♗d4 32.♖xg5 ♕f6 33.♕g4 and White wins.

29...♗h4 30.♕d4 ♕e7 (30...♔h7 31.♘g5+ hxg5 32.fxg5 ♗xg5 33.♗e4+ f5 34.♗xf5+ ♘xf5 35.♖xf5 ♖g6 36.♕g4+−) 31.♖g4! f5 32.♖g6! ♔h7 33.♖fg1 and the knight cannot be taken, which is why White's strategical dominance cannot be contested. (33...fxe4? 34.♗xe4+−.)

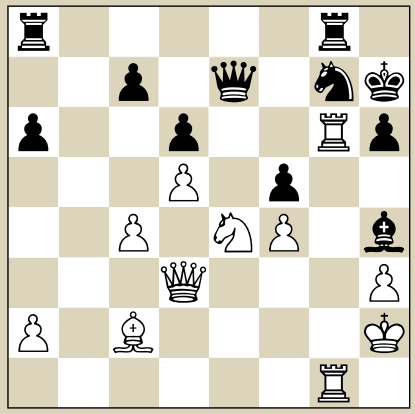


30.♗d1!

Again we see the battery along the diagonal b1-h7 deciding the issue.

30...bxc4 31.bxc4 ♗h4 32.♗c2 f5 33.♖g6! ♔h7 34.♖fg1 ♕e7

34...fxe4?? 35.♕xe4 and mates.



35.♘g3

35.c5! is how the engines would have finished Black off: 35...fxe4 36.♕xe4 ♕xe4 37.♗xe4 and Black has to return the piece with 37...♘f5 38.♗xf5 ♖xg6 39.♖xg6, winning at least another pawn. Adams' move is more than sufficient though.

35...♗xg3+

35...♖af8 36.♕d4!.

36.♕xg3 ♕f7

36...♘h5 loses after 37.♕f3 ♖xg6 38.♗xf5.

37.♗d1! ♖ae8 38.♖xh6+

And Carlsen resigned because of 38...♔xh6 39.♕g5+ ♔h7 40.♕h4+ ♘h5 41.♗xh5. ■

Rowson's Reviews

Homo Ludens

This column is my fiftieth Rowson's Reviews, which began in the summer of 2004. I have deeply appreciated the opportunity to contribute to the world's preeminent chess magazine, and feel privileged to share these pages with the best chess players, writers, photographers and editors in the world.

Alas that the demands of work and family have wrestled chess away from the centre of my life. The game now loiters with intent in the corners of my mind, like bishops controlling the centre from afar, and though I see plenty of chess in my future, I no longer see my future in chess. Nonetheless, I hope my distance from the game allows me to understand it better, and I trust that readers find some value in my attempts to view chess from a wider perspective.

Indeed, despite the alliterative title, this column has never really been about books or reviews. My approach has always been highly subjective, unapologetically so, and my aim has been to celebrate the beauty of the game through the most striking examples in the publications that grabbed my attention, held it, and slapped it around a bit. Where possible I have tried to use chess as a tool to shed light on what it means to be human, to think, feel, decide, hope, be tested and learn.

Rather than a backward glance at the last 49 columns, I wanted to celebrate this jubilee with reference to a book that would allow me to describe how my attitude to chess has evolved over time. I could not have hoped for a better prop for this purpose than *Counterplay: An Anthropologist at the Chessboard* by Robert Desjarlais. This book will not be ready for purchase until Spring, but it is important enough a publication to be worthy of an advanced warning.

The world at large seems to want chess players to be insane geniuses, and rarely allows them to appear normal, in the literal sense of being an accepted norm.

I was interviewed for the book, and just before leaving for the Dresden Olympiad in 2008 the publisher, University of California Press, asked me to be an 'expert reviewer' and give a verdict on whether it was publishable. The premise of *Counterplay* – a Professor of Anthropology attempting to understand 'the chess world' by intensely involving himself in the game and the lifeworld that surrounds it – sounded wonderful, and the author appeared astute and creative on the phone, so I agreed. I feature in this book, which I recommended for publication, and I am quoted on the back cover. I was, as prosecutors might say, *involved*. This review is therefore far from impartial.

An Anthropology of the Chess 'World'

Chess players frequently use the expression 'the chess world' and I hoped the author's anthropological lens would help me to understand what makes the chess world 'a world', a culture, a form of life. Anthropology literally means study of humans, so it should be an accessible subject, but the term is not in common usage outside of academia in the way that psychology, philosophy and sociology are. The subject has various branches and my impression is that there is no settled view of what anthropology is, or should be. We tend to think of anthropology as being concerned with exotic tribes, their rituals, kinship structures and taboos, which we study to enrich and broaden our understanding of how humans manage, some would say against the odds, to live together and create meaning and purpose. However, some modern anthropological work is hard to distinguish from non-fiction writing, so the main requirement for being an anthropologist is probably just to have a deep and abiding interest in what it means to be human, a curiosity about our manifold forms of life, and a will-

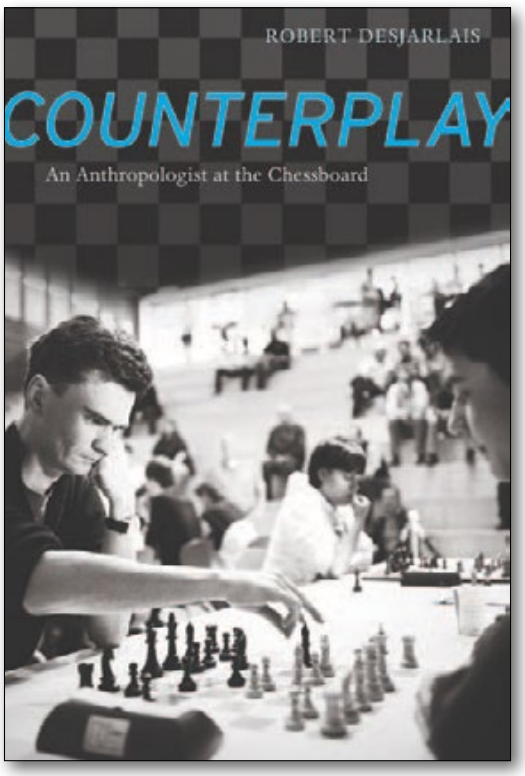
ingness to 'hang out' with people in a discerning way.

A famous modern anthropologist, Clifford Geertz, wrote that 'Anthropology never has had a distinct subject matter, and because it doesn't have a real method, there's a great deal of anxiety over what it is.' Some people hate that sort of ambiguity, but I love it. In fact, I gave serious thought to doing doctoral work in anthropology and I even visited a couple of Anthropology departments to talk over my ideas, but life had other ideas for me, and chess steered me towards education and psychology. In any case, chess players, who are often unfairly cast as oddballs, should appreciate anthropology, because, as Ruth Benedict put it, 'The purpose of anthropology is to make the world safe for human differences.'

In *Counterplay* the author develops this idea:

'The more I gave thought to the question, the more it intrigued me. Why play chess at all? Why take up a game – if game is the best word for it – that can be so exhausting, so demanding, so maddeningly frustrating? Why spend summer weekends holed up in an airless hotel convention centre, shoulder to shoulder with similarly single-minded chess enthusiasts, staring for hours on end at an array of wooden pieces on a stretch of cloth? Why devote one's energies to a time-intensive pursuit that is little valued or understood in one's own society? How is it that, in a world rife with social inequities, violence, economic upheaval, and fast-paced transformation, people are drawn to chess-playing? The anthropologist in me got to thinking: why not conduct fieldwork at the chess board and train an anthropological lens on the cultures and motives of chess players? Why not hang out with the locals and learn what they're up to?'

Why not indeed? The process is known as 'participant observation', which is a form of ethnographic research. For an extended period you live as much like the people you are trying to understand as possible, while retaining enough perspective and critical distance to write about the world in a thematic and illuminating way. Desjarlais has achieved this balance in style. He is a decent player, rated around 2000, equally aware of his competence and fallibility, and he calls upon his own chess experience extensively in the book. He does not do so as autobiography, but as autoethnography – he is not merely describing his life, but closely observing



Counterplay - An Anthropologist at the Chessboard, by Robert Desjarlais University of California Press 2011

the impact of chess on his conception of himself, and by doing so he helps us to develop a general feeling for the chess world and the experiences it offers. There is often no other path to the general than through the specific. The author does not contend that his experience in the North East of the USA is true for all chess players or chess cultures, but only by offering a detailed account from a first person perspective can we get such 'thick descriptions' of the lived experience of a chess player, that allow us to extrapolate about chess in general.

'There is no single chess culture, just as there are no singularly bounded "cultures" at work in people's lives. Any single portrait of an actual chess player entails a specific time, place, and nexus of people. The temporal setting of this book is the first decade of the twenty-first century, an age of weekend tourneys, fading neighbourhood chess clubs, globalized networks of chess players, and rapid innovations in computer and media technologies. Global interconnectedness has made the already intense practice of chess even more fast-paced, information-rich, and cyborgian. The regional setting for this study is primarily the Northeast of the United States, where city dwellers and suburbanites find ways to cram in chess around the edges of hectic, cell-phoned lives. The people under consideration are, chiefly, a multinational mix of amateur, semiprofessional, and professional players, ranging in age from seven years old to eighty-two, from both the United States and elsewhere, whom I've come to know through my engagements with the game.'

The author then adds a particularly important point, which for me indicates the singular value of this book, which is that it acts as a counterweight to the disproportionate attention we give to elite players.

'Considering that those engagements are at a decidedly amateur level, the realm of chess I write about most intimately is that of people who do not make a living from competitive chess but are intensively involved with the game. Accordingly, I do not privilege professional chess as the most authentic and informed realm of chess experience (though professional chess is clearly at a higher level of mastery than amateur chess), but regard it, rather, as one of several fields of practice involved in a much broader theatre of human action and interest.'

This contribution is valuable, because there is something about chess, perhaps even more than other sports, that is top heavy in terms of the atten-

tion we pay to it. The world at large seems to want chess players to be insane geniuses, and rarely allows them to appear normal, in the literal sense of being an accepted norm. It is therefore healthy to learn about how chess's powerful charms can seduce anybody, not merely those at the top of the game, and in this case somebody with a successful academic career who found, for a period of time, that chess was much more engaging and meaningful to him than the life and career through which he was known and accepted.

Passion

The book's purpose is powerfully framed as 'an anthropology of passion', which is a great choice of term for chess because passion literally means to suffer or endure. Desjarlais makes it clear that to play chess with a degree of intensity means not only 'exquisite violence', an expression he uses to characterise the game, but also a degree of obsession that is not entirely benign.

'Call it an anthropology of passion – of the ways that people are enraptured by certain endeavours and activities, and of the vectors of such fervour. Others have written about the passionate engagements of orchid enthusiasts and scrabble players and amateur boxers. I want to chronicle the passions and counterpassions of chess players. My aim is to explore the sinews of their interests and consider when their ardour veers into addiction or obsession. I also want to probe what happens when the zeal for certain endeavours runs dry and people grow ambivalent about their investment in them. Chess lays bare key existential themes in the lives of those touched by its energies. These themes are not unique to chess players; they underpin much of modern life. What delights, struggles, and ambivalences sway people? How do they manage competing interests and passions? What are the rewards and costs of obsessive focus?'

A Swirl of Deeply Felt Intensities

The language in the book is wonderfully rich and evocative, and my copy of the pre-publication version is full of delighted marks and scribbles, for instance when he refers to the game as 'a socialised trance' or when he tries to capture why people play the game, and ends up with a fresh form of words:

'For some, chess is a hobby picked up along the way, while for others it's a cathedral of truth and beauty. There's a score of interlocking reasons why people stick with the game. The attractions often relate to the drama that each game promises, the competitive challenge in pitting one's skills against another's, the intricate complexity that comes with any chess position, the rewarding intellectual conversation that takes place between two minds during a game, how focused concentration can take a person into a domain of pure thought removed from the hassles of everyday life, the way chess enables people to know their mind better, the pleasures of learning and participating in the conceptual history of modern chess, the camaraderie to be found at chess clubs, the thrill of accomplishing something creative at the board, and the way in which truth and beauty – and perhaps a measure of wisdom – can be found in chess. It's a swirl of deeply felt intensities that cut through the lives of chess players.'

A swirl of deeply felt intensities. Exactly! Well, almost. Chess will always remain slightly out of reach of natural language, which is why it is so universal. However, we can still play with language to make sense of chess, as the author does, for instance, in a break up 'it's not you, it's me' letter to The Accelerated Dragon before professing his love for The Sveshnikov.

'For some, chess is a hobby picked up along the way, while for others it's a cathedral of truth and beauty.'

The Subjunctive Mode

A new perspective I learned from the book was the importance of the possibilities in a game that never actually happen. More than most pursuits, the chess game we enjoy and seek out is not the game that is recorded. I have written before about chess as a form of storytelling, and a core aspect of that, Desjarlais helped to realise, is the subjunctive mode – the realm of the possible – that we operate in while we are thinking. The real world we live in is full of brute facts, but when we escape through chess our mind is free to wonder and play – 'what about this, what about that... maybe here, maybe there.' The author captures this point as follows:

'Chess is a labyrinth of possibilities. Thinking about it entails a combination of concrete calculation and what-ifs. Players can see for certain the game position only, and they're often working in a climate of uncertainty and expectation. They're toiling in a "subjunctive mode" of imaginative thought, to filch a term from narrative theory. In English grammar, the subjunctive mode is used to express hypothetical or imaginary situations (...) As psychologist Jerome Bruner puts it, "To be in the subjunctive mode is (...) to be trafficking in human possibili-

ties rather than in settled certainties." When listening to a story, people are drawn into a world of possibility and uncertainty, where they don't know what's around the next narrative corner and where they're invited to participate in the protagonists' own indeterminate progress through the story. Much the same happens in chess, as a player often doesn't know where, precisely, a continuation will lead or how the game will turn out.'

Desjarlais makes it very clear that a core component of the chess experience is the fact that we *play* the game, rather than do it, and play is a core aspect of human nature. Indeed, so much of our cultural activity takes the form of play that we can be characterised as 'homo ludens' – the playing animal, and a key element of play is the subjunctive mode, something that we navigate during the game, and in analysis.

'To begin a chess game is to step into the unknown, to foresee vague possibilities, to encounter formations at once familiar and unexpected. Even when the story of the game reaches its endpoint, there's much that remains uncertain, as there are all those imagined but unplayed continuations that would have led to different games altogether. Players can't help but wonder what would have happened if some of these shadow variations had in fact been played.'

That's right. The experience of playing chess is one big recurring question: What if? That question is the cognitive currency that propels us to think of moves and variations, and then, even after the battle – a sort of pretext for the experience of the subjunctive mode – is over, we continue to explore the what ifs, and look forward to experiencing the same question in our next game.

'As with acts of storytelling, the analysis sessions entail a cooperative "workshop of meaning-making" that helps people make sense of the events and actions they happen upon in life. These efforts at meaning, of making sense of different possibilities, can work to decrease the mood of subjunctivity that persists while the game is under way. Many of the half-knowns and tentative assessments that prevail then can be rendered more knowable afterward, especially because in the post-mortems you can move the pieces around to check out ideas as you work through a string of tmoves. Opacity is diminished in two ways: players can better understand what their opponents were thinking, and they can get a better grip on the infinity of variations.'

> I recommend the book very strongly to anybody who has ever asked themselves why they bother to play chess, and what, if anything, the game 'means'.

The next time I play, it will be motivating to know that I am entering a subjunctive realm, and the next time I have a post-mortem, it will be reassuring to know that I am thereby decreasing the mood of subjunctivity that I set myself up for.

Ambivalence

Perhaps the main reason I feel charmed by this book is that it is so well-balanced. The author is as credible when describing his passion for the game as he is when he gradually falls out of love with it. There have been lots of non-fiction books about chess which convey the positive side of chess – the wonder of it all, but few that honestly face up to the experience of alienation that arises when players realise that the game is not the existential panacea they thought it might be. Life goes on, and chess doesn't always help us to live it well. Desjarlais highlights that the competitive spirit of the world, and the quest for chess status becomes strenuous after a while, and he had me laughing in agreement with the observation that: 'A hierarchy of dominance exists, not unlike that which can be found at a posh country club or among a troop of baboons.'

He also refers to the 'trivial depth' of the game, but captures the alienation best through his own experience:

'Later, before heading out to my car, I walk through the tournament area. I step past the tournament directors' office, where two men are keeping track of results reported and complaints lodged, past the display of chess books, past the food vendors selling soggy hot dogs and crisp burgers. I stumble around three kids seated on the carpeted floor, placing pieces on a board, and I overhear two men discussing a game. "That's a nasty pin", mutters one of them. I stick my head into the skittles room and see pairs of players jousting over rooks and knights, and then walk into the playing hall, where all is quiet and somber and deadly serious, as though a world is at stake. I feel I should be seated at a board as well, fighting it out. But I don't care to be here. Playing now would be like counting pebbles in the sand. I feel discordant, antiheroic. Moments later I'm on the road, heading for home.'

I can't quite say I know the feeling, but I identify with that sense of be-

ing 'discordant, antiheroic' and have felt it many times when I was, as a Grandmaster who is supposed to love the game, suddenly unable to muster any deep concern for the quality of my moves or the outcome they might lead to.

Later the author says:

'Chess does not quicken my pulse like it once did. The sublime involutions of the game remain, but the deep, soulful music I once heard is fading.' Reflecting on Hans Ree's famous remark, he concludes, with gentle irony: 'Chess doesn't seem beautiful enough to waste my life on.' As a form of reconciliation, he quotes Marcel Proust who said that the true paradises are paradises we have lost. For those who have known its abundant charms, but have also seen through them, chess is such a paradise.

Why Chess?

There is much more to say about the book, which examines the experience of online chess and computer preparation, as well as the experience of learning openings and playing endgames. I recommend the book very strongly to anybody who has ever asked themselves why they bother to play chess, and what, if anything, the game 'means'.

When I was younger, I used to read and re-read the list of definitions of chess in *The Complete Chess Addict* by Mike Fox and Richard James. Now you can find them online, for instance at the Exeter Chess Club site, but whatever your source, you can now add several fantastically insightful expressions from this book that attempt to capture the essence of the game, some of which are included in the author's concluding thoughts. It's a long excerpt, forgive me, but if it's any consolation I'll end with it.

'Chess reflects how people long for meaning and purpose in their lives, how we want to live intensely, craft something of beauty, test ourselves against others, and achieve a sense of mastery in our endeavours. Chess speaks to the place of ritual and cultural forms in our lives, and how we seek rites, devices, or magical charms to keep anxiety at bay. It illustrates the ways that people act creatively and agentively, and how we try to rework the grounds of our lives through practical efforts that can be magical in effect. Chess play shows how we are indeed a genus of homo ludens, for children and adults delight in play (as do many other animals) and welcome the chance to immerse themselves in an imaginative realm that transcends the everyday. It reveals the ways that such immersions can be both enriching and troubling; while they offer people alternative modes of being and consciousness, they also lead some to find more intensity and clarity in those ways of being than in their everyday lives and relationships, to such a degree that they end up venturing into ludic flights from life. Our attraction to the game shows how we want to share something of interest together, and to situate ourselves in a greater history of human effort. It reveals how many try to fashion themselves into better, wiser beings in the world. It attests to the social dimensions of people's lives, from the need to connect with others to the competitive impulses and status wrangling that emerge whenever people gather in a room. Chess practice points to the ways people are embedded in complex systems of thought and action, and the ways we draw from new technologies to enhance our efforts in the world, while those same technologies are forever shaping how we think, act, play, feel, perceive, and relate to others. Indeed, while there might be something quintessentially human in people's engagements with chess, we need to keep in mind that humankind is itself endlessly changing, and as the elements of humanness change, so do the energies and import of a play form like chess.' ■

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Garry Kasparov

HIGEST ELO-RATING EVER: 2851

DATE OF BIRTH 13 April, 1963

PLACE OF BIRTH: Baku, Soviet Union

PLACE OF RESIDENCE: Moscow, Russia

What is your favourite colour?
Blue.

What kind of food makes you happy?
Good food; its origin is unimportant.

And what drink?
Plain water. Occasionally a nice wine; rarely anything stronger.

Who is your favourite author?
The list is too long to pick one favourite.

What was the best or most interesting book you ever read?
Mikhail Bulgakov, *The Master and Margarita*.

What is your all-time favourite movie?
Casablanca, The Godfather, One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest.

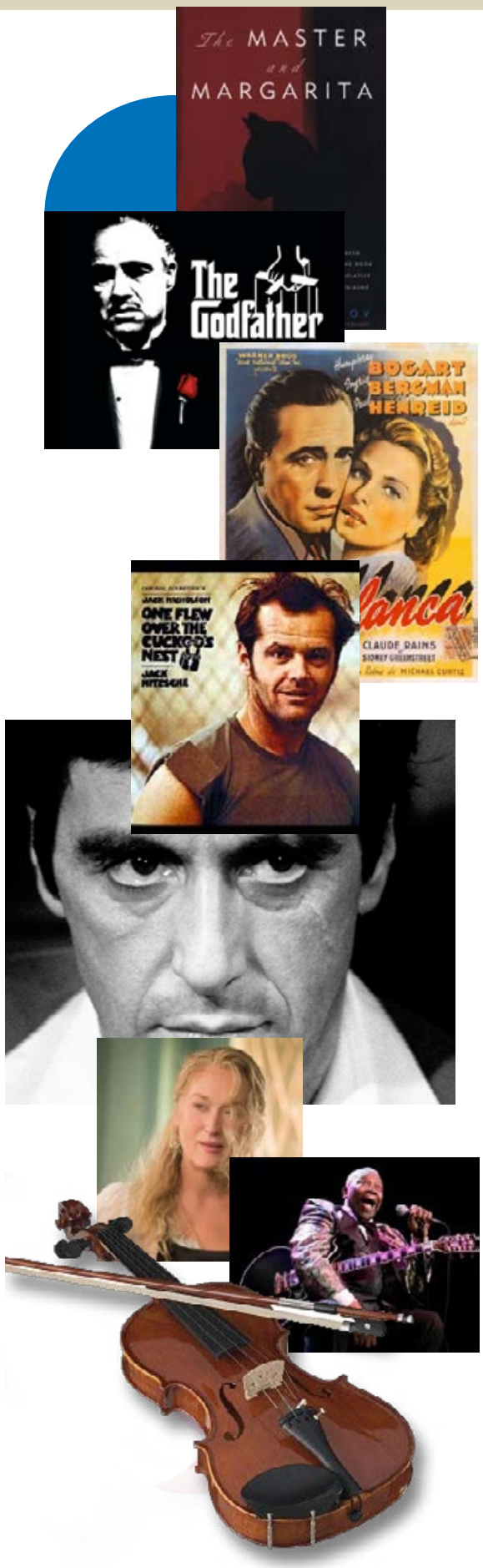
What is your favourite TV series?
I'm afraid I'm not qualified to answer. I watched some episodes of *24* and even that was on DVD.

Do you have a favourite actor?
Of today, Al Pacino. Of the past, Gregory Peck.

And a favourite actress?
Meryl Streep, Katharine Hepburn.

What music do you like to listen to?
Classical or jazz.

Do you have a favourite painter or artist?
Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino



What do you see as your best result ever?
For personal satisfaction, Linares 1993. For accomplishment, crossing 2800 by scoring 9½/11 at Belgrade 1989. Statistically, Linares 1999.

What was the best game you ever played?
It's between Game 16 against Karpov in our 1985 match and with Topalov in Wijk aan Zee in 1999.

Who is your favourite chess player of all time?
An indiscrete question for someone who wrote a series called *My Great Predecessors*. I cannot play favourites.

Is there a chess book that had a profound influence on you?
In my early days, Bronstein's *200 Open Games*. Later, again Bronstein with his book on Zurich 1953. Fischer's *60 Memorable Games* was also important.

What is the best chess country in the world?
Alas, no nation has come forward to promote the culture of chess the way the USSR did.

What are chess players particularly good at (except for chess)?
I suppose number-crunching, since some also have success in poker and financial trading.

Do chess players have typical shortcomings?
A long list, starting with a lack of solidarity.

What was the most exciting chess game you ever saw?
Board 1 of Greece-Scotland in the final round of the Malta Olympiad in 1980. Makropoulos's victory (yes, that Makropoulos) gave the USSR the better Buchholz score over Hungary for my first gold medal.

What is it that you appreciate most in a person?
Intelligence, courage, and openness.

What is it that you dislike?
The opposite of the above.

Do you have any superstitions concerning chess?
My only superstition was given to me at birth: the number 13.

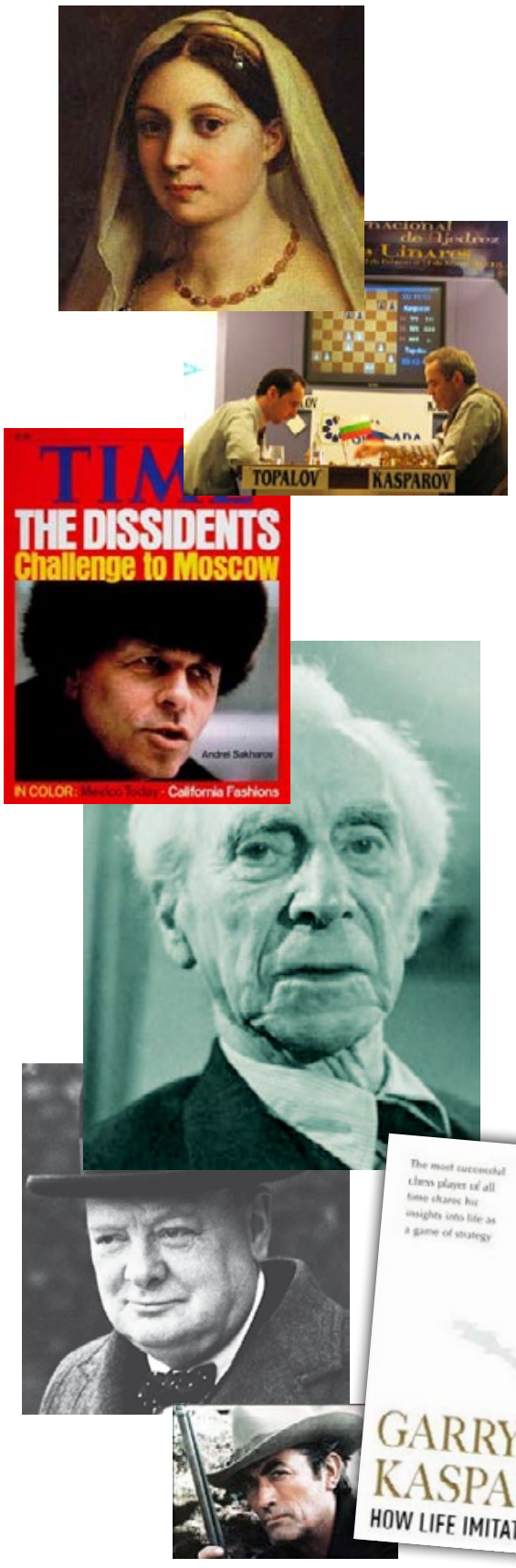
Who or what would you like to be if you weren't yourself?
I'm still working to improve myself.

Which three people would you like to invite for dinner?
Bertrand Russell, Winston Churchill, and Andrei Sakharov.

Is there something you'd love to learn?
Foreign languages.

What is your greatest fear?
Irrelevance.

What would you save from your house if it were on fire?
Humans first, then my computer and notes. Everything else can be replaced.



If you could change one thing in the chess world, what would it be?
To improve the situation by changing one thing is science fiction. Relying on aliens would be more realistic.

What is the stupidest rule in chess?
Zero tolerance for being at the board to start the game. But from reading David Kaplan's FIDE proposals much worse is to come.

What will be the nationality of the 2050 chess world champion?
A very optimistic question, which assumes chess championships will still be played and that people will still care. I hope that is the case.

Is a knowledge of chess useful in everyday life?
To answer this question I had to write an entire book, *How Life Imitates Chess*, available in more than 20 languages!

What is the best thing that was ever said about chess?
'Chess is not for timid souls.'
– Steinitz

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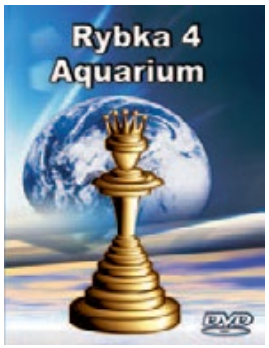

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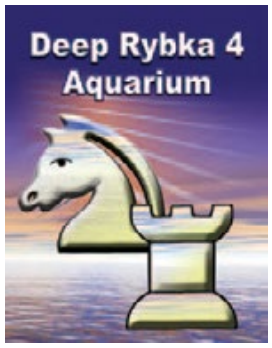

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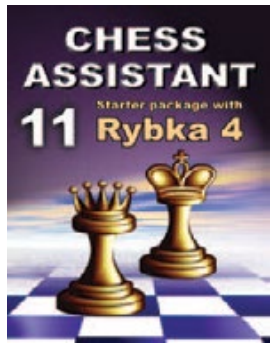

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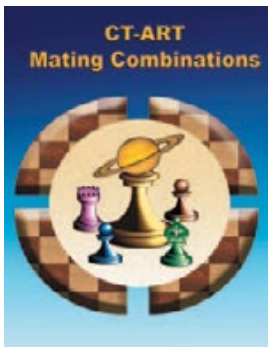

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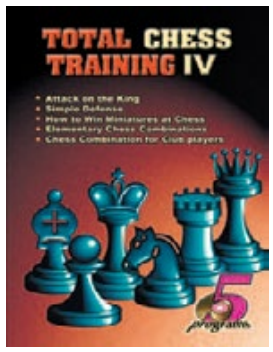

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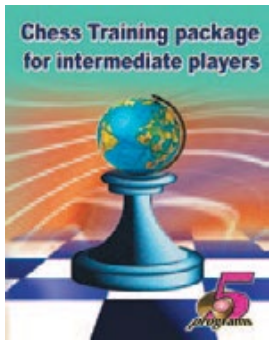

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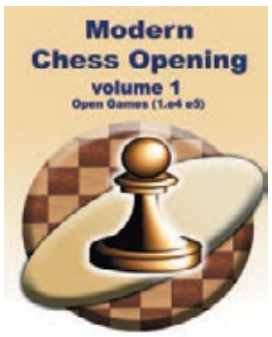

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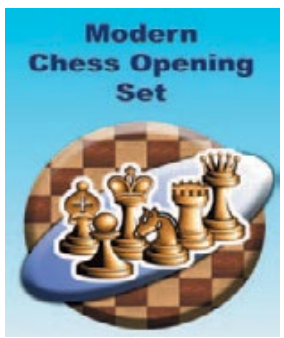

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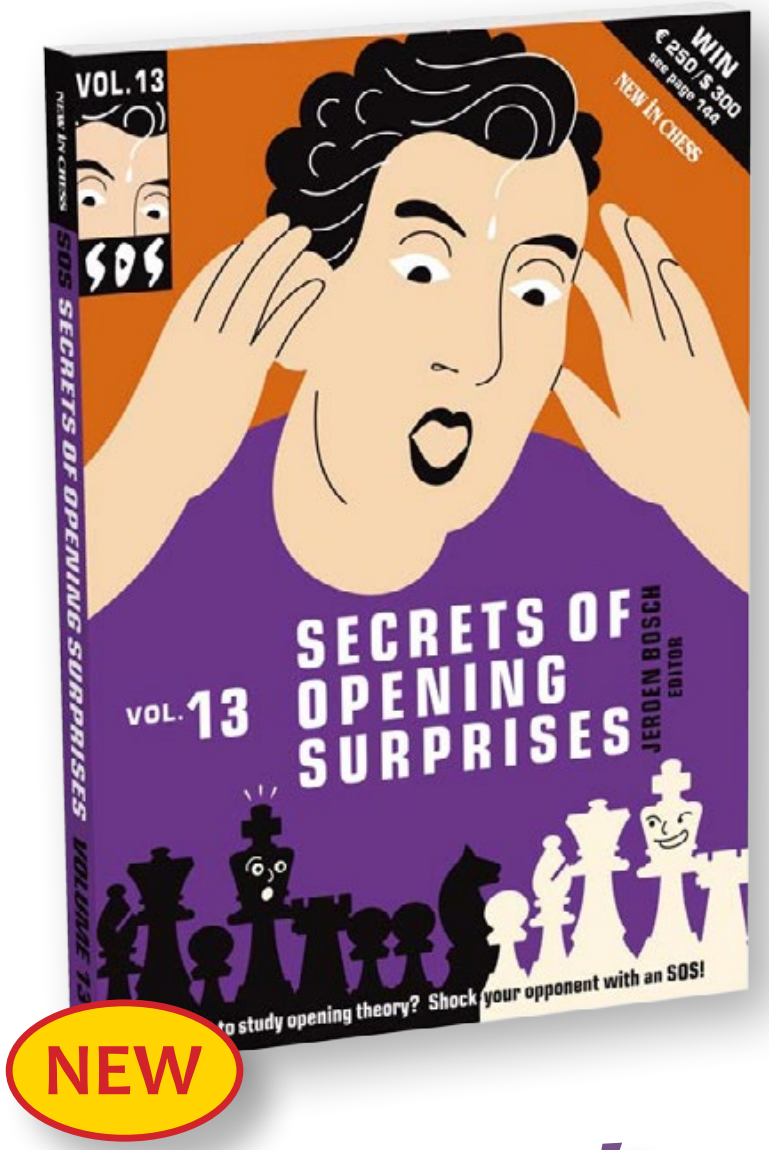

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